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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



[A TERRIBLE DISCOVERY! WAS HE DEAD?]

## ROSALIND'S VOW.

### CHAPTER XVII.

SIR KENNETH AGAIN.

ROSALIND made no reply to this ominous speech of Mr. Vansittart's. She was, as we know, no weak girl to be alarmed at a phantom; and, moreover, she possessed enough self-confidence to feel there was, as yet, no necessity for alarm. All the same, it was extremely disagreeable to find herself by the side of a man who spoke in such a strain. To cover the awkwardness of her silence she said,—

"Will you tell me what the time is, please? My watch has stopped."

He seemed a little surprised at her perfectly quiet, matter-of-fact tone, and drew forth his watch—a heavy gold-repeater.

"It is five minutes to eight," he said, returning the watch to his pocket. As he did so a locket, very curiously carved and shaped, which had been attached to his bunch of seals

slipped from the ring, and fell on the floor of the phaeton, just at Rosalind's feet.

She stooped to pick it up—for he had been quite oblivious of his loss—and was on the point of giving it back to him, when she chanced to look at it a little more closely. As she did so, she started violently, and looked up swiftly into his face.

"Mr. Vansittart, what is this?" she exclaimed, holding it out to him.

"A love token!" he answered, with a laugh. "It was originally some West Indian charm, I believe, a thing over which Obi rites have been said, and human blood has been spilt. A curious trinket, is it not? I don't suppose you have ever seen one like it before!"

"But that is the point—I have!" she returned, excitedly. "Indeed, if I am not greatly mistaken, I have had this very one in my hands many years ago."

"Impossible!"

"I can easily prove it," she said, and as she spoke she touched a spring. It flew open, and the miniature of a woman's face gazed back at her from the inside—a beautiful, dark,

passionate face, with Southern eyes, and full, red lips. At the sight of it Rosalind gave vent to a little excited cry.

"Maraquita—oh, Maraquita! It is indeed you—your own sweet self!" She kissed it again and again, Vansittart watching her in a species of sullen amaze. Then she turned on him imperiously.

"Tell me how this got into your possession, sir?"

"Indeed, I shall do nothing of the sort," he answered, angrily. "Give it me, Mrs. Hawtrey. It is my property, remember!"

She hesitated a moment, but finally yielded it to him, and he put it away in his pocket again. Then she reiterated her question.

This time he answered it.

"The locket was given me some years ago as a charm, but the circumstances surrounding the gift are such as I don't feel justified in repeating to a third person. I am sure you will see the impossibility of questioning me farther."

At any rate, she saw the bad taste of it; but the mystery still seemed to her a great

one, and, puzzle as she might, she could find no solution to it.

Mr. Vansittart soon recovered from the fit of sullenness into which this incident had thrown him, and showed a disposition to resume the conversation that it had interrupted.

"Why is it that you try so hard to avoid me?" he queried, fixing his blue eyes on her as he spoke.

"Try to avoid you!" she repeated, in some slight confusion. "I—"

"You need not deny it for the sake of politeness," he interrupted, with a sneer. "The evidence of my own senses is sufficient."

"In that case there is no necessity for me to reply to your charge at all," she said, quietly.

"Is it coquetry?" went on Mr. Vansittart, still keeping his gaze intently fixed on her averted face, "or is it that you really and truly wish to have nothing to do with me? You are quite aware of the interest I take in you!"

"I am quite aware that you are taking advantage of the circumstances that have forced me to accept your company in order to insult me!" she exclaimed, turning upon him with flashing eyes. "Let me get down, Mr. Vansittart. I will walk the rest of the way home rather than listen to you!"

He laughed softly.

"I admire your spirit, but I haven't the least intention of complying with your request. Do you know you look wonderfully lovely when you are angry? The red colour flashes into your cheeks, your eyes blaze like diamonds. You might be a goddess of old, dooming her votaries to eternal banishment from her presence. I, who am the humblest of your votaries, refuse to accept my fate. I fight against it; and if I am conquered—well, I shall have had the satisfaction of striving. Rosalind, Rosalind, you are a prize well worth fighting for!"

"How did you know my name?" she exclaimed, surprised.

Again he laughed.

"Ah! that's my secret. I may tell you sometime. The name of Rosalind suits you, it suggests a dark, fiery beauty, who is so charming in her angry moods that one can easily imagine how more than charming she would be in her softer ones. I never had a fancy for meek women; they are tasteless and stupid. Give me a girl in whose veins the warm Southern blood flows, in whose eyes the warm Southern passion glows, who will be vehement alike in love or in hate. Such a woman as yourself, Rosalind!"

He was fast losing control over himself, and from his swift words, and the slight incoherence with which he now spoke, Rosalind guessed the truth.

She measured the distance from her seat to the ground, and then resolved to spring down, and risk the consequences rather than remain a minute longer. But just at that moment Mr. Vansittart changed the reins into his right hand, and threw his left arm round her waist.

"Rosalind!" he said, and his breath fell hotly on her cheeks, "the first moment I saw you my heart went out to you. In my creed 'he never loved who loved not at first sight!' I think of you by day—I dream of you by night—in a word, I adore you!"

Rosalind struggled violently to free herself, but he held her tight, and her efforts were all in vain.

Involuntarily she screamed out for help, though a moment's thought would have told her how unlikely it was on that lonely road that anyone would come to her assistance.

Opposition only irritated Mr. Vansittart; and even if his passions had been less excited he would still have endeavoured to carry his point, and kiss the beautiful lips that only one man had ever pressed, and that man her husband.

Strangely enough, Rosalind's thoughts at this moment flew to Sir Kenneth. If he were

only here, if she could only invoke the assistance of his strong arm! The miscreant at her side would then have ample grounds for regretting his abominable conduct.

"You beautiful fury! Why don't you submit to the inevitable?" exclaimed Mr. Vansittart, forgetting all considerations of prudence, and slipping the reins over his wrist, so as to have both hands free.

But hardly had the words passed his lips when there came the rapid trotting of horse's hoofs behind, and Rosalind redoubled her cries for assistance, with the result that the horseman rode straight up to the mare's head and caught the reins, calling out at the same time on Vansittart to halt.

The latter, instead of obeying the injunction, answered with a curse, and letting go his hold on Rosalind snatched up the whip, and struck the gentleman fully across the face with it, then whipped up the mare, who responded to his command by starting off at a gallop.

But the stranger was not to be so easily shaken off, and still retained his hold on the bridle of the mare, seeing which Vansittart again struck his whip fiercely across horse and rider.

The former reared high in the air, and the gentleman, unable to give his full attention to his horse, was thrown violently to the ground, and the wheel of the phaeton passed over his shoulder.

Rosalind gave a loud scream, and even Vansittart seemed somewhat sobered by the accident, which, for aught he knew, might have a fatal ending.

"Stop, stop, for Heaven's sake, stop!" cried the girl, in an agony of supplication. "Surely you have enough humanity in you to try and save a fellow creature's life which you yourself have imperilled!"

Suddenly enough, Vansittart drew rein, and Rosalind sprang down and ran as quickly as she could to the scene of the catastrophe.

Just here the road was dark, for the trees on either side arched overhead, and the leafy canopy was so dense that the moonbeams could not find their way through.

Still, on the white dusty road, a huddled-up black figure was visible, lying perfectly motionless, while a little distance away stood the frightened horse, apparently watching his unfortunate rider.

Mr. Vansittart, after Rosalind had left him, hesitated for a few minutes whether he, too, should turn back, and see if the man was really dead or not; but second thoughts, if they are not always the wisest, are almost invariably the most selfish, and he finally decided to drive on to the Castle, and leave his groom and Taylor—who could not be more than a mile behind—to render what assistance was necessary.

Rosalind heard him drive away, and then knew that she was left alone to minister to the injured man.

The darkness and loneliness of the spot were sufficient to have excited a feeling of nervousness, but no such feeling found a place in the girl's breast; indeed, she was only conscious of a desire to help the man whose life had been risked in her behalf.

As she approached he neither moved nor gave any symptoms of animation, and when she knelt down and raised the heavy head it fell back lifelessly on her arm, while a warm trickling of something wet on her bare hand made her aware that he was bleeding from a wound, probably on the temple, since it fell from that side.

Then a sudden terror assailed her. Was he dead, and was that why he lay so still?

Oh, for a lantern, even a match, to show her whether there was still hope! Supporting his head on her left arm she searched in his waistcoat pockets in the hope of finding some fusee box, and luckily her search was successful; for, in addition to a silver cigarette case, she drew forth a little match box of the same metal, which contained vestas.

Striking one of these she bent over the injured man, and looked eagerly in his face, and then she saw that it was her husband!

## CHAPTER XVIII.

ROSALIND LISTENS.

BUT Sir Kenneth was not dead, though a violent kick from the mare had produced a wound on his left temple, and thrown him into a state of insensibility, from which it seemed difficult to arouse him.

Rosalind had hardly recovered from the surprise of seeing him there before Taylor and the groom came up, and were loud in their expressions of surprise at the accident, of which Rosalind did not, of course, give them more than a hasty sketch.

"The gentleman seems very seriously hurt," observed the groom, scratching his head with perplexity. "Seems to me the best thing we can do will be to take him to Weir Cottage."

"To Weir Cottage!" repeated Rosalind, involuntarily. "On, no!"

"And why not, marm?" asked Johnson, in some surprise. "The Cottage is the nearest house, and the gentleman's certainly in a condition to bear a longer journey than is necessary. Indeed, I doubt now whether or no he'll recover."

No more had Rosalind spoken than she was assailed by the impulse that had made her hesitate what was, after all, a most reasonable proposal.

Had she any right to throw an obstacle in the way of Sir Kenneth's being taken to Weir Cottage when he was in this dangerous state, especially as she knew Mrs. Selwin to be an excellent nurse, who would give all her time and attention to an invalid?

It is true, her own presence at the Cottage must be kept carefully away from the Baronet, but that would not be such a difficult matter.

"You are quite right," she said to the groom. "Let the gentleman be taken to Mrs. Selwin's."

Accordingly, Johnson and Taylor (the latter considerably sobered by the accident and his walk in the night air) contrived a rude sort of stretcher, upon which they placed Sir Kenneth, whom they then conveyed to the cottage, where Mrs. Selwin met them with expressions of surprise and horror.

Rosalind, meanwhile, had inquired the way to the nearest doctor, and had implored him to lose no time in attending to the injured man, an injunction which the medical man at once obeyed, and he and Rosalind returned to the cottage together.

By this time the Baronet had been got to bed; but even yet full consciousness had not returned to him, and Dr. Metcalfe shook his head very seriously as he saw him, and muttered something about "concussion of the brain."

"He is not dangerously hurt! Surely he will recover?" cried Rosalind, who was by at the time; and the physician looked at her in surprise, for her tone was full of wild pain, and her two hands were clasped together as if in piteous entreaty.

"I hope he will, my dear lady!" he returned, gravely; "but I do not conceal from you that his condition is likely to cause a good deal of anxiety. In all probability it will be some days before he is quite sensible."

This prophecy proved correct, for though concussion of the brain did not ensue, brain-fever set in, and poor Sir Kenneth lay, talking incoherently in his delirium of home, of Edith Charlton, of his mother, but never once mentioning the woman to whom, a few short weeks ago, he had plighted his troth.

During this time it was not Mrs. Selwin, but Rosalind who nursed him—Rosalind, who sat up with him day after day, night after night, who was ever ready to hold the draught to his fevered lips, or bathe his hot brow; Rosalind, whose miserable tears fell on his pillow as she straightened it.

She would not confess, even to herself, that



they were tears of remorse. Even yet her heart was hardened, and she vehemently tried to believe that what she had done had been right and just, and that Heaven had selected her as the instrument of its own vengeance. But the humanity in her would not let her view with indifference Sir Kenneth's miserable condition.

It seemed so pitiful that he, who had been so strong, so full of health and energy, and vigour, should now be laid low with illness, and so weak as to be hardly able to raise hand or foot without assistance!

The doctor, wondering at her ceaseless care and attention, even remonstrated with her for it.

"My dear lady," he said, "you will make yourself ill if you don't take rest! Let Mrs. Selwin share your labours; or, at least, let her nurse the invalid in the daytime, if you insist on keeping the vigil at night?"

But to this, Rosalind would not listen. She knew that directly Sir Kenneth recovered consciousness she would no longer be able to continue her ministrations, for he must never know that his wife had been so near him during his delirium.

She had been forced to implore both Mrs. Selwin and the doctor not to betray her; and, though they gave their promise freely enough, she saw that Mrs. Selwin, at least, partly suspected who she was, although she was too kind to give voice to her suspicions.

Fortunately, her physique was strong enough to bear the strain that would have proved too much for a more delicate woman; and, besides this, she was one of those women—thank Heaven there are a good many of them!—who are born nurses.

It required no training to teach her the duties of a sick-room. They came as natural to her as breathing, although this was the first time they had been called into requisition.

Strangely enough, Sir Kenneth, even in his delirium, seemed conscious of her influence, and proved himself docile as a child to her commands.

His eyes followed her with a strange, wistfulness as she moved gently about the room, and it almost seemed as if he were searching in the chambers of his bewildered brain, for some remembrance of the past that would connect her with the present.

It was a miserable time for all the inmates of the Cottage. The wings of the dark angel were hovering terribly near, and who could say what would be the end of this conflict of the powers of life and death?

It was in Sir Kenneth's favour that he had a splendid constitution, and this saved him. By degrees the fever abated, and the delirium vanished, leaving him weak and helpless; it is true, but still on the fair way to recovery.

Directly she saw her patient had regained distinct consciousness of what was passing around him, Rosalind withdrew from the sick-room, and Janet Selwin took her place. The young wife was astonished to find how reluctant she was to yield to another the privilege of attending to her husband, and only strictest necessity would have induced her to do it. As it was, she extracted from the doctor and the Selwins a promise that her name should not be mentioned, and resolved to stay at the Cottage until Sir Kenneth had become convalescent enough to leave his room. After that, to remain would be dangerous, inasmuch as he could not fail to discover her identity.

And so the days passed by, each one bringing fresh strength to the invalid. Once or twice he made inquiries concerning his former nurse, but they met with evasive replies, and he finally came to the conclusion that the tall, grey-robed figure he dimly remembered, could only be a phantom of imagination which his delirium had evoked.

Rosalind's room adjoined the one into which Sir Kenneth had been moved—indeed, the two apartments communicated by means of a door, which, as a rule, was kept locked, but which, since the Baronet's accident, had

generally remained open, so that Rosalind might be able to pass in and out at will. Even after she had ceased her ministrations on her husband she liked to sit at the curtain-embowered doorway out of his sight, but still in a position to hear every word that he said.

One afternoon, feeling rather tired and done up, she fell asleep in her arm-chair, and when she awoke was rather startled at the sound of a strange voice in the sick-room, where Sir Kenneth was sitting propped up in bed with a multitude of pillows. The voice was a man's, and in effect belonged to Mr. Rogers, Sir Kenneth's solicitor, who, on hearing of his client's accident through a few hasty lines that the Baronet himself had penned, had come down to Weir Cottage to see how the invalid was progressing.

The first words Rosalind heard were spoken by the solicitor.

"I did not even know that you contemplated a visit to this part of the world, so I was proportionately surprised by the contents of your letter. I thought you intended going to America!"

"So I did," answered the Baronet, slowly; "but before leaving England I wished to see a man who lives near here—one Piers Vanastart, of whom you may have heard."

"I have heard of him, but I was not aware he was a friend of yours."

"Neither is he—now. Once we were rather intimate, but he is not the sort of man I should care to call 'friend.'"

"That I can readily imagine," returned Mr. Rogers, dryly. "If report speaks correctly, he is rather to be avoided than sought by people who have any self-respect. Did you see him eventually?"

"I did not. I was on my way to his house when my accident—of which I only retain the faintest remembrance—happened."

From this it will be seen that Sir Kenneth did not even know who his assailant had been, and was also, in ignorance of the identity of the woman whose cries for help had brought him to her assistance.

"I shall, however, endeavour to obtain an interview with Mr. Vanastart directly I am well enough to leave the house," added the Baronet. Then, after a moment's pause, he went on, "I suppose you have heard nothing from—Lady Hawtrey?"

"Nothing," was the reply. "I showed you the letter we had from her saying she would not accept any pecuniary assistance from you. To tell you the truth, my impression is that we shall not hear from her again. There was a certain finality about her letter that seemed to say she was firm in her resolve to support herself by her own exertions."

The Baronet groaned before he answered. "Yes; I am afraid you are right. She is not the sort of woman to go back from her word, and yet I would do a good deal to force her to take an income that would place her above the necessity of working!"

There was a pause of a few moments. The unseen listener's heart beat violently as she sat still in her chair behind the drawn curtains.

Presently Mr. Rogers spoke again, but hesitatingly, like one not quite sure of his ground.

"Sir Kenneth, I hope you won't think I am taking a liberty, or trying to thrust my advice down your throat, as the saying goes, but it really does seem to me a very sad thing that you and your wife should be separated like this, within a few months of your marriage, and with no prospect of reconciliation. Is there no way by which you could be brought together again?"

"None!" cried the Baronet, with fierce energy. "We are parted as completely as though death had severed us, and by no possibility could we live together as man and wife. You don't know the circumstances, Rogers, or you would not suggest such a thing!"

"No, Sir Kenneth, I don't know the circumstances, but I know that you are both

young, and that it is a very dreadful thing that there should be no chance of an heir to your old family name and estates. Of course I have no right to obtrude my opinion on you unasked, but I have known you from a boy, and the interest I take in you is not merely professional."

"My dear old friend, I know it!" exclaimed Sir Kenneth, warmly. "If I thought it could do any good, I would tell you the story of my marriage, and then you would see the futility of your suggestions, but it is such a miserable, humiliating page of my life that I would fain blot it out for ever. To recall it means agony to me even now, although my love is dead beyond all chance of resurrection."

Why did Rosalind suddenly feel as if cold steel had been plunged in her heart? Surely the assertion could not surprise her!

"But you loved her once?" said Mr. Rogers, a little curiously.

"Yes, I loved her as few women are loved; but now my one desire is never to set eyes on her again. She killed my affection as cruelly and deliberately as I should crush an adder that suddenly started up at my feet, and, as you know, nothing is more impossible to revive than a dead love. But for all that, I wish to make such provision for her as my wife is entitled to, and I also wish to prove to her how terribly she has wronged me—that, however, I could do without seeing her. No, my friend, it is useless to speak of reconciliation. Happiness and I have parted company for ever, and the woman who has wrecked my life is the woman who bears my name!"

## CHAPTER XIX.

### DREARY DAYS.

Up to this time Rosalind had not moved from her position in the arm-chair, and it had not struck her that there was anything dishonourable in listening to a conversation not intended for her ears. As Sir Kenneth spoke the last words she started up with white face and quivering lips, and, throwing a shawl over her shoulders, ran swiftly downstairs, and out of the house, weighed down by a burden that, within the last quarter-of-an-hour, had grown additionally hard to bear.

For some hours she wandered along the lonely seashore, unconscious of the dreary greyness of the afternoon, or the complaining moan of the incoming waves—unconscious of everything save the bitter words Sir Kenneth had spoken. His love was turned to hate. He regarded her as the author of all his misery, and her very name had become a horror to him!

There was nothing surprising in all this—nothing but what Rosalind might naturally have expected, and yet to hear him say it had been very terrible to her. The words had stabbed her like a poisoned dagger, and she could not recall them without a thrill of unutterable agony.

But they were the means of revealing to her a secret which came upon her with a sudden overwhelming consciousness. She loved Sir Kenneth—loved him as only such a soul as hers can love, with a depth of devotion which was as passionate as it was unfathomable.

How the love had grown—how long it had lain in her heart—she could not tell; but there it was, and—ah! irony of fate!—it had only woke to vivid, throbbing life at the moment when she learnt his was irrevocably gone!

Not until the grey autumnal evening had fallen did she return to the Cottage, and then it was with the fixed determination to leave it the very next day for ever. It seemed to her impossible, now, that she and Sir Kenneth could remain under the same roof any longer; and, if she could prevent it, he should never know that they had been so near each other during the anxious weeks of his illness.

Her arrangements were soon made. She had very little packing to do, and the most difficult part of her task was that of acquainting Mrs. Selwin and her daughter with her

intended departure, and exacting from them a reiterated promise that her name should not be mentioned to Sir Kenneth. This promise they both gave, and it was with tears of affectionate regret that they wished her goodbye, for they had become exceedingly attached to her during her short stay at the Cottage.

Rosalind had decided on going to London, for her experience at M—, when she went to the registry office, had convinced her of the difficulty a small country town would offer to a governess attempting to obtain a situation, without the most unexceptional references. After all, there is no place like London for keeping oneself hidden from friends and enemies alike!

Thither she accordingly went early on the following morning; and Sir Kenneth, as he heard the door open and shut on her departure, had no idea that it closed on the woman whose finger his wedding-ring still encircled!

Rosalind knew something of London—enough to make her avoid those parts of it where apartments were likely to be expensive, for her money had dwindled down to a very low ebb, and her only hope of adding to it was by work. She took one room somewhere in the Euston-road, and then, resolutely trying to forget the hopelessness and misery of her position, she devoted all her energies to the task of finding employment.

Oh! the weariness, the humiliation, the sickness of "hope deferred" of the following weeks! The weather was miserable—grey November days, when the fog-demon enveloped everything in a thick veil of mirk, and the pavements were encrusted with a species of black grease, as uncomfortable to walk on, as it was disagreeable to look upon. The contrast between the clean, bright atmosphere, the fresh, salt-flavoured breezes of Devonshire, with its windy downs and grand sea, and smoke-begrimed London, would have been great under the most favourable circumstances, but, in these dull November days, Rosalind actually sickened for a breath of pure air, and a sight of the wind-ruffled sea.

Day after day she plodded wearily to the "Agency" where she had put down her name, and every morning she paid her penny for permission to read the advertisements in the newspapers. But no one seemed to want a governess. Cooks, housemaids, nurses, were all greatly in request, governesses alone were at a discount.

And during all this time her money was steadily diminishing, though she spent as little as she possibly could, and her "daily bread" was in such proportions, as only just served to keep body and soul together.

At length she broke into her last shilling, and then, one by one, her little ornaments were sold, until her wedding-ring was the sole article of jewellery she had left.

It was very dreadful, very humiliating, to the proud girl who had had such implicit faith in her own resources, and had never dreamt they would not command at least enough money to keep her in respectability.

There was no one to whom she could apply for help, for the peculiar circumstances of her life had prevented her making friends, and her pride made an appeal to the Charltons as impossible as to Sir Kenneth himself.

Christmas drew near. The shops were all decked out in their gayest variety; cars full of ivy and holly made spots of brightness in the dingy streets, which were thronged with cabs, bearing holiday seeking people away to their several destinations.

Sometimes, when Rosalind was trudging home to her miserable, cold little room, she would catch a glimpse through the windows of some happy fireside—a young mother bending lovingly over her first-born—a crowd of happy boys and girls, fresh from school, crowding round their parents' knee—a husband and wife sitting opposite each other, talking in the ruddy firelight—commonplace, every-day sort of pictures certainly, but to the weary watcher, full of the pathos of a lost happiness,

suggestive of what "might have been," but never could be!

Little wonder that she grew pale and thin, while the great dark eyes gleamed like twin stars, too large for the face in which they were set.

Even her energy, indomitable as she had fancied it, drooped under the constant strain, and sometimes she caught herself wondering whether she was indeed the same girl who had gone down to Crowthorne Manor less than six months ago, in all the pride of her youth, and health, and beauty, determined to conquer, whatever difficulties might lie in her path, by sheer force of will!

One morning—it was the twenty-first of December—she turned out the contents of her shabby little purse, and found they amounted to exactly four shillings and sixpence halfpenny. Four shillings and sixpence halfpenny between her and starvation! For now all her ornaments were gone, and there was nothing left to sell or raise money upon.

How she envied Maraquita lying in her nameless grave by the side of the pool! She, at least, was at peace, even if the peace had been bought at the cost of a crime.

Many a time she had looked longingly at the river as it swept on its way to the distant sea. In its broad bosom so many sorrows were drowned, so many aching hearts found rest, and there was nothing in her life to look forward to—no hope that the future would ever redeem the past!

But Rosalind was not a coward, and though death seemed sweet to her, she was the last woman in the world to seek it.

It must not be thought that in this struggle with poverty she had made no efforts beyond seeking for a position as a governess.

She had offered herself as a nurse, a parlour-maid, a seamstress, but all the offers had met with the same result.

As a matter of fact, her appearance was against her. She was too beautiful and well-bred to fill a menial position, and the fact that she was a lady was one impossible to be hidden.

People don't care to see a lovely and delicately-nurtured girl doing housework, or cleaning knives. There is something incongruous in it, and something suspicious as well.

On this particular morning Rosalind first of all went to the "Agency" where the usual answer awaited her, and then looked at the daily papers.

There was one advertisement that seemed hopeful—a lady advertising for a young woman "of Christian principles, who would not object to make herself generally useful."

From the wording of the advertisement Rosalind fancied that the "principles" were a secondary consideration to the usefulness; but, anyhow, she determined to make a personal application, and some indefinable instinct told her it would be successful.

Unfortunately, the address given was a village in Essex, and to take a return ticket there and back would absorb her small remaining portion of money. Nevertheless, she determined to risk it, and accordingly went straight off to Liverpool-street, and an hour later found herself walking along the muddy road towards "The Towers," for such was the superb name of the residence of the lady who wished to combine Christianity and usefulness so impartially.

The Towers proved to be a pretentious and painfully new red brick house, standing a little way back from the road, and approached by a carriage sweep, backed by pigmy shrubs, all of which seemed either dead or dying.

There was not a tree on the place that had been planted more than twelve months, and the consequence was a general bareness, out of which the crude, red brick house rose with a startling effect of cold in winter, and warmth in summer.

Mrs. Barnes-Smith, the mistress of this imposing establishment, was a tall, thin, wasp-waisted woman, with sharp eyes, and a voice to match.

Rosalind's first impression of her was not an agreeable one.

"I have five children, and it would be your duty to instruct them from ten to twelve in the morning, and from two to five in the afternoon," she observed, after a few preliminary questions.

"I suppose you speak French?"

"Yes."

"And German?"

"Yes."

"And you play and sing well?"

"Moderately well," replied Rosalind; whereupon Mrs. Barnes-Smith requested her to "give her a song," explaining at the same time that the grand piano was a new one, and had cost a hundred guineas. She said this in a tone of voice that intimated Rosalind must consider herself a favoured person to be allowed to play on such a superior instrument.

"Fairly satisfactory! fairly!" she said, with a wave of her hand, as the girl returned to her seat. "Of course I have heard better playing, but one cannot expect everything in this vale of tears!"

She shook her head solemnly, and remained silent for a moment.

"In the morning, before you begin the children's lessons, I should require you to dust the drawing-room; and you would also be expected to see to their dinner in the middle of the day. In the evening you would assist me to dress when I was going out, and after that you would do the plain sewing, and bath the children before putting them to bed. Do you think you could do all this satisfactorily?"

"I would try," responded poor Rosalind, and it was significant of the low ebb of her fortunes that she should make so meek a reply.

She was clear-sighted enough to see that Mrs. Barnes-Smith would get as much as possible out of her dependants; that she was, in other words, a perfect slave-driver; but, even with this knowledge, Rosalind determined to take the situation if she could get it.

"Now about salary," observed the lady, briskly. "As you see, I keep a large establishment, and have a great many expenses, besides many calls on my charity, so that I really can't afford what would be called a high salary. I gave my last 'help' ten pounds a year."

Ten pounds! The blood flew to Rosalind's face. She had had fifty guineas a year at Crowthorne, and very little to do for it.

"Ten pounds is not much!" she faltered. "But you must think of the advantages that accompany it," was the reply. "You will have a home such as you have probably never lived in before; and you will be surrounded by persons of refinement and cultivation. Indeed, I don't see what more you can possibly expect!"

Mrs. Barnes-Smith had noted at a glance the extreme simplicity of Rosalind's attire, and had put her own interpretation upon it. Beggars, she knew, could not afford to be choosers, and this reflection had encouraged her to offer terms so pitiful that it was almost incompatible with self-respect to accept them.

Nevertheless, Rosalind finally agreed to them, and then presented certain written testimonials from the school in which she had taught before her marriage.

"Your name is Grant then—Miss Grant," said Mrs. Barnes-Smith, glancing up from the papers, and Rosalind simply bowed acquiescence, for she had so far departed from her original plan as to resume her maiden name.

"Well," added the lady, who, in the face of having made her own terms, was not inclined to be hypocritical regarding credentials, "then we'll consider it settled that you come for a month on trial. This is Tuesday. Can you come next Thursday?"

Rosalind immediately acquiesced, and rose to take leave. Before she could reach the door it was opened from the outside, and two gentlemen came in. The one was a stranger to the girl, but the other she at once recognised.

It was Captain Marchant.



## CHAPTER XX.

## REJECTED!

"How do you do, Miss Grant—I beg your pardon—Lady Hawtrey?" said the officer, after a moment's surprised pause. "It is some time since I had the pleasure of seeing you last."

Rosalind's face grew first crimson and then deadly pale. Mechanically, she murmured some confused answer to his greeting, inwardly breathing a prayer that the hostess had not heard what he said. But that this was not the case was proved a moment after by Mrs. Barnes-Smith's rasping voice,—

"So you are a friend of this lady's, Captain Marchant!"

"I had the honour of her acquaintance some time ago," returned the officer, with a bow, flashing at the same instant a rapid glance from one woman to the other, and conscious of an approaching storm.

By this time Mrs. Barnes-Smith had left her seat, and advanced to the group at the door, her head held well aloft, her eyes full of curiosity and suspicion.

"Did I not hear you say something about 'marriage'?" Were you referring to this lady's marriage?"

Marchant looked at Rosalind for instructions; but her eyes were bent on the floor, her hands were clasped tightly together in an agony of self-abasement.

The officer would have said "no!" just as willingly as "yes!" to his hostess' question if he could have been sure that Rosalind wished it; but not knowing how the land lay, he deemed it best to be on the safe side and tell the truth, since Lady Hawtrey had given no hint that a lie would be desirable.

"Yes," he said, to Mrs. Barnes-Smith. "I was referring to this lady's marriage. I have not seen her since the ceremony took place."

The mistress of the house turned angrily on Rosalind.

"How was it you did not tell me you were married? Why did you attempt to pass yourself off on me as a single woman?" she demanded, with shrill disgust. "And to think that I engaged you to come near my innocent children, and be in the same house with me! What a shameless creature you must be to deceive me like this! But, thank Heaven, I have learned your true character in time! Leave this house, and you may thank your luck that I don't give you in charge for trying to obtain money under false pretences!"

She had worked herself up into a passion of vulgar rage that wanted to vent itself in ugly words. Only the presence of Captain Marchant restrained her from pouring forth a further torrent of vindictive abuse on poor Rosalind's devoted head. The girl made no reply, only cast one glance of utter scorn on the angry woman, and drawing her veil over her face, passed out of the house without one backward look.

Perhaps it may be wondered why Mrs. Barnes-Smith should have allowed her temper to get the better of her in this manner, but the explanation is very simple.

The gentleman who had entered with Marchant was her second husband, who was considerably younger than herself, and whom she had recently married.

She had seen with what admiration his eyes had fastened on Rosalind's face, and then, for the first time, she herself had been struck with its loveliness, and wondered at her own foolishness in engaging a girl who, by virtue of her pretty face, would be quite certain to divert from Mrs. Barnes-Smith the masculine admiration that she looked upon as her own exclusive right.

Hence, her first thought was to remedy the indiscretion into which the prospect of getting good services for small pay had so nearly betrayed her, and this Marchant's disclosure had enabled her to do.

As Rosalind went out, the officer, with a hasty word of excuse, followed her, and over-

took her just as she reached the gate of the "Towers."

"I am afraid I have been indiscreet in some way," he said, regretfully. "I need hardly tell you that I am very sorry to have been the means of causing you annoyance!"

"It was not your fault," she returned, in dull, apathetic tones that sounded to the listener something like despair. "You only told the truth!"

"But perhaps it would have been more politic to keep silence altogether?"

She shook her head and walked on, looking neither to the right nor left, her lips set in a rigid line, her eyes fixed and despairing.

Although she knew Marchant must have heard of her marriage through the Charltons, she felt too utterly spiritless even to ask him how Edith was, and when he had seen her last.

Her own acquaintance with Captain Marchant had commenced some time before she went to Crowthorne.

A cousin of his had been at the school where Rosalind taught, and Rosalind had once gone home with her for the holidays. This girl had married a year or so ago, and was now in India.

But Folke Marchant's knowledge of the girl was not limited to the short time during which they had been personally acquainted. He knew more of her family and friends than she had ever guessed, and even at this moment he was puzzled as to whether he should follow her to her destination, and thus find out where she was hiding herself, or return to the "Towers" and complete the business that had brought him hither.

Prudence counselled the latter alternative, for, truth to tell, this same business was somewhat important, being nothing more nor less than a loan which he was anxious to extract from Mr. Barnes-Smith—or rather, his better half, for it was she who held the purse-strings.

His abrupt departure with the despised governess was not likely to be in his favour, and so, after a rapid review of the situation, Captain Marchant decided to return to the Towers, and when he had completed his business it was his intention to try and overtake Rosalind on her way to the station.

She saw him depart with the same indifference as she had seen him follow her. Her money and resources were both exhausted, and a leaden sort of apathy had taken possession of her, numbing all her faculties into a sort of lethargy.

She wondered what would be Sir Kenneth's sensations could he see her at this moment—broken in spirit, penniless, almost starving!

After she had gone a little distance she turned off from the highroad leading to the station into a lane, that seemed to promise more solitude.

She knew the train by which she had arranged to return to London did not start for another three quarters of an hour, and it would be better to spend the interval walking rather than in the stuffy little waiting-room, with perhaps half-a-dozen other people who were also waiting for trains.

The lane she was now in was lonely, and seemed to be little used. She did not meet a soul on her way, but at some little distance she saw a white house standing back from the pathway, and this she unconsciously made her goal, determining to turn back when she had reached it.

What she thought of as she went along it would be difficult to put in words, for her mind was a chaos, from which only the one fact of her helplessness and hopelessness stood out with any distinctness.

She felt now that the end had come. She knew not what to do, or which way to turn; and the only thing that remained to her was her pride, which would not permit her to make known her pitiful condition to anyone who had the power of helping her.

Before she reached the house that was to be the signal for her return a sudden giddy faintness assailed her, and she staggered

blindly forward, then fell headlong on the hard, frosty road—unconscious of her sorrows, and in a dead faint.

Thus she was found some five minutes later by a young man who had come from the white house, and who was walking leisurely along, wrapped in profound meditation. The sight of that prone figure made him hasten his pace, but it was with an expression of disgust.

"A drunken woman at this time of the morning! What a blot upon Nature!"

One glance at the pale, rigid face told him his mistake, and he started violently with a muttered exclamation.

"Rosalind Grant—Lady Hawtrey! What, in the name of all that is wonderful, can bring her *here*—and in this condition?"

He wasted no time in useless wonderings, but produced from his pocket a silver flask containing brandy. A little of this he contrived to pour between the set, white lips, and presently his efforts were rewarded, for Rosalind breathed a long, deep sigh, and opened her dark eyes on the man who had come to her aid.

"Don't you know me?" he said, gently. "It is Claud Stewart. Let me help you to rise."

He did so, but she was so weak and helpless that she could not stand without assistance, and he supported her with his arm. She had eaten nothing all that day, and she was as much exhausted physically as mentally.

"Are you staying near here?" asked Claud, both surprised and bewildered at her manner.

"No. I am living in London. I came from Liverpool-street this morning, and I intended going back by the mid-day train."

"But you are far too unwell to think of travelling!"

A sudden flood of tears welled up to her eyes, and she was too weak to prevent their falling.

Claud looked away so as not to embarrass her.

"Shall I telegraph to your—husband?" he was going to say, but substituted "friends" instead.

"I have no friends," she returned, pathetically. "I am living alone."

Claud was too delicate to ask her how it was she and her husband were separated so soon after their marriage, but he still supported her with his arm, and was leading her in the direction of the white house.

"I live there," he said, pointing to it.

"Will you come in and rest for awhile? You will be better after you have had a glass of wine and a biscuit."

She accepted the offer gratefully; then an idea struck her, and she said,—

"I did not know you had left the Cedars."

A deep crimson flashed his face, then died away, leaving it deadly pale.

"Yes," he answered, with some constraint.

"I left the Cedars two or three months ago."

He did not add more, and Rosalind asked no further questions—indeed, neither spoke until they had reached the house, the door of which was opened to them by the man who had been Claud's valet at the Cedars.

The interior of this house presented a very great contrast to the inside of the Cedars, where costly furniture and gorgeous Eastern rugs and fabrics had given the idea of unlimited wealth. Here the furniture was extremely simple, even homely in its character. As a matter of fact, Claud had taken the house as it stood, and the furniture at a valuation.

Rosalind was revived by the wine and biscuit, and after she had eaten, a faint tinge of colour came back to her lips, and she began to look more like her old self.

"I am better now," she said, with a smile that Claud thought very pitiful. "Tell me how Edith and the Squire are?"

The question was not a happy one, and seemed to cause the young man both pain and embarrassment.

"I don't know," he returned. "I have neither seen nor heard of them since I left the Cedars."

(To be continued.)

## THE DIFFERENCE.

-O-

A MAIDEN who spent the weary hours  
In going from house to house with flowers,  
Stopped at a gorgeous mansion, where  
She spread to view her bouquets rare.  
Wan was her look and dim her eye,  
And as she marked the passers-by,  
Her youthful bosom seemed to be  
The dwelling place of misery.

A lady from out the mansion came,  
A richly-costumed, pompous dame,  
Whose look of vain and haughty pride  
The flower-vendor terrified.  
She viewed the poor girl's bright-hued store,  
And turned the bouquets o'er and o'er,  
Then asked the price, demurred, and then  
In the rich mansion went again.

The maiden, foot-sore, sad, and weak,  
Wiped off the tear that gomed her cheek,  
And then again she passed along  
Amid the city's giddy throng.  
At length a bright-eyed working girl,  
With ringing laugh and sunny curl,  
Approached her, and in merry sport  
A bunch of her sweet flowers bought.

But as the girl the money took,  
The buyer marked her wretched look,  
And kindly sought the cause to know  
Why her young heart was touched with woe.  
The girl replied, with tearful eyes,  
"At home my aged mother lies;  
She's ill, alone, and should be nursed,  
But I must sell my flowers first."

The shop-girl paused and heaved a sigh,  
A tear was in her clear blue eye;  
She'd saved a sum to buy a shawl,  
But "Here!" she cried, "I'll take them all!  
My mother's dead, and doubtless she  
Is looking now from Heaven at me,  
And she will smile—I know she will—  
To see me hug her precepts still."

## MY LADY OF THE LAKE.

-O-

## CHAPTER XLVIII.—(continued.)

"WELL, if you must have it," said Guy Forrester, "my wife and I have separated by mutual consent; and she is living with her father, who is about as great an old curmudgeon as ever lived. I wish her joy of him!"

"Was this arrangement her choice or yours?"

"I told you it was mutual."

"Yes, certainly you told me so!"

"If you mean to be rude, Gerald!" cried his cousin, with flashing eyes.

"Rude! Oh, dear, no. I am seeking information, that is all."

"And if I decline to give it? If I decline to be cross-questioned?"

Mr. Andrews only shrugged his shoulders, but there was something peculiarly suggestive in his action.

"You didn't come here to bandy words with me like this!" said Mr. Forrester, with irritation.

"Shrewd creature!" returned the other, with a smile. "Of course I did not; these are only preliminaries. I needn't tell you the real object of my visit. It is the sordid need which follows all mankind, and prevents the spirit from soaring to more elevated subjects. The lack of gold produces more deadly sins than any other. People say money is the root of all evil. They make a mistake; it is the want of it. Most men would be something akin to the angels if only they had everything they want."

"Even then they might suffer from satiety," returned Guy, almost sadly.

"Well, I never did see such a fellow as

you!" laughed Gerald Andrews. "You remind me of the man who never was satisfied, who yet, nevertheless, got to Heaven somehow; and a jolly nuisance he must have been to his fellow citizens, for even there he was not satisfied, and declared his *halo didn't fit*. If such an improbable thing were possible as that, you might join that discontented gentleman some day, Guy—which you will admit is scarcely likely. Why, I am certain things would not satisfy you for long, although the artistic part of your nature might be touched, if all the accounts of the Golden City are true; but I am afraid that when once you had filled your portfolios, you would pine for the flesh-pots of Egypt. There is a good deal more of the material than the ethereal in you, my beloved cousin!"

Even though the parson's shafts were directed against himself, Guy Forrester could not help being amused at the conversation.

"Wherever I find myself by-and-by, old boy," he laughed, "one comfort is you will not be able to look down on me, for you will scarcely obtain a higher position!"

"That's as may be," replied Gerald, calmly. "I am glad to find you in such comfortable quarters here at any rate. Why, these rooms are about all your fancy could paint them, I should think."

"Oh, yes; they're nice enough."

"Nice enough! Why, they cost you a pretty penny, I should say."

"Well, that's true; but I've done well with my pictures of late. People will buy of a prosperous man, but seldom, if ever, of a poor one. So I make a point of keeping up a good appearance."

"Well, I am rejoiced to find you in such flourishing circumstances," replied the parson. "It matters little to me how you have come by the needful, so long as you are in lawful possession of it. Things have not gone quite so smoothly with me, I confess. The fact is, I am in temporary difficulties. I shall be all right by-and-by, but at the present time there are a few things which must be paid, a bill to meet, and some pressing accounts."

"I'm sorry for that," returned Guy, not offering to assist him with a son. "But I hope you will weather the storm. In the meantime I suppose you have come to me to be *perdu* for a little time, and I daresay I can manage to give you a shakedown."

"Thanks many, I'll stay the night. But I am not going to pay for anyone to do my Sunday duty. I must get back before then."

"But what about the creditors?"

"They must be satisfied, of course."

"How so? If you are out of funds."

"I am, but other people are not. Most folks have a goose or a gander whom they can hunt up to lay golden eggs for them. You're my goose, Guy, and you will have to produce the eggs somehow."

"I certainly must have been one when I thought I could trust to your friendship and cousinly feeling," cried Guy in anger.

"I don't look at it in that light at all," retorted Gerald. "A bargain is a bargain. You promised to reward me for my assistance."

"That was because I thought I had found a gold mine, but I didn't."

"Well, I performed my part of the play, and if you don't intend to help me, why it will be my duty to—"

"Shut up!" cried Guy, with an evil gleam in his dark eyes. "Be sensible, Gerald! What is the use of our quarrelling and cutting one another's throats? If you make it hot for me you may be sure I'll make it hot for you. The same blood runs in our veins; you know it, and you are well aware that I shall do as I say."

"Look here, this is every coin I have in the world, at present. How can I give you what I don't possess?" and he turned out his pockets as he spoke. "But don't look so blue, old man; I am expecting a fresh supply before very long, and I'll do what I can, if you don't make too large a demand. But I'll tell you the truth, Gerald. I am heavily in debt myself;

we are both in the same boat, so you must be merciful. I am altogether out at elbows!"

"That is a bad look-out for you, dear boy," returned the other, coolly. "But let us hope that you have found your goose prolific, for you're not the man not to have one. You know the old saying don't you?"

"Large fleas have little fleas upon their legs to bite 'em, and little fleas have lesser fleas, and so *ad infinitum*!" No one can be without their own personal worries, nor can we shake off the creatures who torment us. The law of nature is for people to prey upon each other."

"A pleasant doctrine, certainly," said Guy. "Well, I suppose you can trust me. Go back to your Sunday duties. Tell me what you want, and I'll do what I can. I'll send it."

Gerald Andrews shook his head. "No, thanks old chap. I must stay with you till the fresh supply comes. There's no help for it, and you will have to pay, not the piper, but the parson! On second thoughts, I shall not object to a week in Paris," and as he spoke, he leant back in his chair, and took his pipe from his pocket.

## CHAPTER XLIX.

GOOD-BYE.

MRS. ROSLYN, or Lady Dalkeith, as we must now call her, having determined to start for England in answer to her husband's summons, did not let the grass grow under her feet.

In fact, she gave herself little or no time for thought, and before midnight she had made nearly all her preparations for her start upon the morrow.

She had paid her servants for three months, and given them orders to act under Dr. Martin's directions, and to do all which he might desire. And the two women, who were old and faithful servants, promised implicit obedience to her friend.

She wondered many times during the evening why Frank Macculine had not come to see them.

She knew nothing of the closed door at the doctor's house, and the struggle of the good man within.

She felt sure that Frank would hear her news from his uncle, and she thought it quite possible that Celestine might have written it to him also; but she made no inquiries, for she saw that the little Frenchwoman was upset, and she wisely judged that in affairs of the heart people are better left to themselves.

But when he never turned up at all, she determined that Celestine should not be parted from him without a word of good-bye. So, when she had packed what she deemed would be necessary for their journey, and set her servants to do the same for Mary, and Celestine for herself, she found breathing space at last, and, seating herself at her davenport, she began a letter to Dr. Martin.

It cost her dearly to write it, for her heart cried out for another look into that kindly, earnest face.

If we were to glance over her shoulder we should decipher the following characters, although the bold, firm handwriting was scarcely in its usual form.

"DEAR FRIEND,—

"Before I leave for England let me thank you for all the kindness and friendship which you have shown me during the many years we have been neighbours and worked together. You brought brightness into a darkened life, and I shall ever remember the fact with gratitude!

"I want you to take my new hospital well in hand during my absence, and my heart will be with you and it!

"It has struck me that you might make use of my house as a little convalescent home for cases needing especial care, so I have left my two good servants in charge, who you will find ready and willing, so far as it lies in them, to follow out all your wishes."



"Will you tell your nice nephew of our hasty start? The steamship in which I have taken passages for Celestine, small Mary, and myself, sails before noon to-morrow, and of course he will come and see the last of us."

"When upon the trackless ocean how my heart will turn to M—, and the beloved ones I have left behind! It does not bear thinking of, but still I hope to find joy and comfort in my only child!"

"Doctor, my dear old friend, let me beg you not to come with Frank. We have taken our farewell of one another—and one not to be forgotten while life lasts. We must not meet again! I need not assure you that I will write, not only to tell you of my safe arrival, but of all that befalls me upon my return to the old country."

"I can only give you two addresses; Lake St. Ormo Cottage, Farnshire, and the second you know, for it is that of our mutual friend, Lord Rangor, who would, I am sure, willingly forward any letters which are directed to his care for me. And now, praying that Heaven may ever bless you, I must say those adieu of sad words, so often carelessly spoken. "Sad, not in their real meaning, 'Heaven be with you,' but sad because they are often the prelude of much desolation. Still they must be said. Dear friend, good-bye!—Yours ever,

"MARGARET DALKEITH."

And as she ended, two large tears fell upon the paper and bleared that signature which she had not signed for so many years. And those tear-stains upon her farewell to the doctor were bitter pleasure, if such an expression can be understood, to him. Sir Roger had never seen such signs of softened sorrow in his wife; with him she was proud, and his reserve was reflected in her soul.

With the doctor, who had been an inspiration to the best side of her nature, even as she had been to his, things were very different. She could weep for and with him. She sat still a long time when she had closed her letter, looking at the familiar name upon the envelope, with a sort of despair creeping around her heart lest she should never see its owner again.

Then mastering her emotion she went to the bedroom where her servants had retired to rest, and giving her letter into their charge she requested that it might be taken round to Dr. Martin's house early the following morning, with directions that it might be conveyed to him at once.

Then, having kissed Celestine, she retired for the night, not sorry to be alone. And could anyone have looked within those closed walls they would scarcely have recognized proud Lady Dalkeith in the pale and stricken woman fighting out her battle upon her knees.

It was pain and grief to her even after so many years to go back to a man who had so misjudged her, and dealt so harshly with her—but he was dying, and how could she refuse?

Moreover, for her daughter's sake it was absolutely necessary that she should be upon the spot upon the event of Sir Roger's death, to take charge of her. She must not be left alone in the world, more especially at her tender age.

At last the strong woman—weak in her tenderness and love—conquered, and rising from her knees pale and calm, with the expression of a chastened angel upon her sweet face, went quietly to bed.

But sleep would not come to her; not even the rosy dawn found her white and weary-lids closed. However, a cold bath refreshed her, and she was the first in the house astir on that her last morning in M—.

Dr. Martin received her letter, and replied to it, telling her that his carriage would be at her door to take her down to the steamer, and that his nephew would accompany her, instead of himself, as he had intended, since her wishes were his law, greatly as he would have desired to pay her this last tribute of affection.

He said little more; a few earnest words bespoke his hopes for her journey, and her future comfort, and with a promise to write to her to the care of Lord Rangor he closed his letter, addressing it to the old familiar name of Mrs. Roslyn, even though she had signed her true one to him. Perhaps he thought it better to keep up the old title. Perhaps he could not bring himself to call her by it just then.

Anyway it was so directed, and after a pause to still his own feelings, he went down to the breakfast-room to seek Frank, to tell him Mrs. Roslyn's wishes, which he was well aware he would carry out.

The young man was there before him, and the two stood gazing into one another's faces, each conscious of the suffering through which the other had passed, to leave such an indelible stamp upon the features.

"Uncle," said Frank, in a low voice of hardly suppressed feeling, "I am not going to keep up any pretence with you. I have heard your trouble from Celestine, and I am more than sorry for you. I know what you must have suffered; I never dreamt of the truth, but I conclude you knew it all along, since you—"

He paused, scarcely knowing how to express himself.

"Yes! I knew it. Do not let us talk of it," answered his uncle in unsteady accents. "There are some things which will not bear putting into language at all. You know, I suppose, that Madame St. Croix accompanies our dear friend; this, I fear, will not bring you happiness, Frank; so since we are both sufferers, we can sympathise with each other, but let it be the silent sympathy of eye and hand, nothing more."

And as by a spontaneous impulse the hands of the two men were clasped in a grip like a vice, which bespoke the strength and depth of their inner feelings.

"Frank," said the doctor, "I am not to meet her again, but she wishes you to see them off; you will go, of course?"

"Certainly; I could not refuse, even though to see my poor little girl's sorrowful face will break my heart, knowing that she is going away past my reach, when we might have been so happy together."

"Did you ask her to stay with you, Frank?"

"I more than asked her."

"And she said?"

"No."

"She does not love you then?"

"Yes, I am sure she loves me, but she has perhaps an overstrained idea of what is required of her in return for the kindness which has been shown her."

"I think she is right, sorry as I am for your disappointment, my boy. I respect the little widow for her decision, even though I confess the gentle influence of her womanly presence would have soothed your old uncle, for I flatter myself that both you and Celestine would have elected to share my home, even though you could have one of your own."

"I can answer for myself, uncle, and I think I know something of Celestine's views and feelings as well, but it is not to be."

"Don't lose heart. Both of you are still young, and there is plenty of time for the wheel of fortune to turn in your favour. A thousand things may happen to free her from her feeling of responsibility. But, Frank, I scarcely think it possible for it to be overstrained. You did not see the terrible position from which that good woman rescued her. I did, and I do not think a lifetime of devotion would be too great a return for all which Mrs. Roslyn did for her. Taking her from the bare hovel in which she existed—I cannot say lived—to her own bright and happy home, was a transition from darkness to light indeed; and I am glad to think our friend is not alone. If she proves to be contented in the renewal of her home ties, Celestine will be free; but, to my mind, not till then."

"I think she shares your opinions, so I have that hope left to me."

"Then you are fortunate," said the doctor, sadly. "Now I am going to give orders about the carriage. I have promised it to Mrs. Roslyn. You will go with it, Frank, and don't be late; it might flurry her."

"I have never seen Mrs. Roslyn flurried," returned his nephew. "Have you? I really don't think that she could be," he added, with a smile.

"No, I have not either; but then I have never seen her late for anything. Punctuality was, and is, among her many good qualities. How she will be missed in M—!"

"No one more so."

"Well, having seen about the carriage, I am off to the surgery."

"What! without your breakfast?"

"Breakfast must do without me for once. A man is not so elastic in his feelings at forty as he was at five-and-twenty."

"Perhaps not; but the young fee acutely too. As for you, uncle, you speak as though you were a hundred, instead of being just in your prime. Few men could beat you at anything, and none whom I know."

"Ah! you're fond of me, Frank, and I am grateful for your affection; but you must not flatter me too much. Even at forty men grow vain. Poor human nature is but a weak thing after all."

"It is a grand thing, uncle, and my acquaintance with you has made me doubly certain of the fact."

And with a look of deep affection and admiration, Frank Masculine laid his hand upon his uncle's shoulder, and gazed into his earnest, true, grey eyes; while he, seemingly too much affected for words, went his way. But Frank was not offended at his lack of response; he understood that his uncle's heart was too full for speech, as indeed was the case.

Even the patients in the surgery wondered what cloud was resting upon their kindly doctor and friend; but before the day was out, most of them ceased to do so, for the news quickly spread that the "good Samaritan" had left M—.

The reports were varied. Some, indeed, were absolutely wild, the truth being known only to Dr. Martin and his nephew. As for Frank, he braced his nerves to go through the ordeal of the final parting with the woman he loved.

Mrs. Roslyn was quite ready when he arrived in the doctor's carriage, and stood in her drawing-room awaiting him, calm and pale; but Celestine's fingers fluttered in his like frightened birds, and set his pulses all astir, even though he had determined to be master of himself, and not to upset her further. But when, all unexpectedly, Mrs. Roslyn disappeared, his arms were about her, and she was clinging to his neck. This was the calm "good-bye" he had intended.

## CHAPTER L.

### FORGIVEN.

SIR ROGER DALKEITH lay in a peculiar state—conscious, but absolutely refusing conversation. His mind appeared to be fixed upon one object only—the return of his wife.

About that he showed very decided interest, and more than once questioned Lord Rangor as to how soon there could be an answer to the telegram which had been sent to Australia; and how long, if the reply were favourable, it would be before she could arrive in England. All this Lord Rangor explained again and again with marvellous patience.

When the telegraphic message arrived, Lord Rangor read it first himself, then carried it straight to Sir Roger's room.

It was brief, but conclusive,—

"I will come by first steamer."

She could have said no more if she had written a letter. It was all which the sick man needed to comfort him.

He grasped the Earl's hand with all his

feeble strength, but it was not great. Sir Roger knew that Lady Dalkeith could not arrive at present, but still he looked and behaved as though he were always watching and listening for her advent.

And this restlessness grew upon him. The fear seemed to deepen within his heart, not that he should not see her again, but that he should not have strength to carry out his own wishes after her arrival. This idea so gained upon him that he sent for his solicitor and gave him full instructions.

It took some time to do, and Lady Dalkeith was half-way home before the will and papers were all signed. Lord Rangor and the doctor, who was usually in attendance, witnessed his signature—although they knew nothing of the contents of the will itself.

Sir Roger appeared happier in his mind when all this was finished, and the papers were taken by his lawyer, at his wish, and put into his strong box. After all was done he appeared to continue his old habit of listening. And thus time passed on.

One day he started up eagerly. Lord Rangor was by his side, and leaned forward to catch his words.

"She has come!" he whispered, and sat up erect in bed—as he had not done without assistance for a long time—and his lordship noted that some vehicle had stopped at the door.

Still he thought it merely a sick man's fancy, but he left the room at once to see if there were any foundation for it, and somewhat to his surprise found that Lady Dalkeith really had come, and that Celestine and little Mary were with her.

He accorded them all three a hearty welcome, and ringing for his housekeeper, he gave the two latter into her charge, desiring her to make these two unexpected arrivals comfortable, and to prepare rooms for them at once.

Then he took Lady Dalkeith aside, and in a few feeling and manly words told her of the trick which had been played upon her husband concerning her death, and the shock he had experienced upon learning that she was alive and well—followed, as it was, by a stroke—his anxiety upon regaining consciousness to find out all particulars about her, and his desire for the telegram, which she had received to be sent immediately. Lord Rangor said nothing of the will, considering that it would be bad taste to do so.

When her ladyship learnt her husband's deep anxiety to see her, she seemed to forgive him all at once, and her lips trembled as she listened.

"I will go to him without delay," she said, and turned towards the door as she spoke. Her old friends at M— and the pain she had felt at leaving them were forgotten.

Her first love sprang up anew in her heart. She had no thought at that moment even for her child. Once more Sir Roger was walking by her side under the stately fir trees of his ancestral estate, and he was telling her of his love, and asking her to be his wife; and the sun was setting with a rich, red glow seen through the blue-green pine trees in the west.

He was telling her how she was the only woman who had ever touched his heart, and she was listening to his words with a glad stir within her own.

The old days had come back to her, when their love was new, and brought with them a sudden warmth.

The quarrels and unhappiness were put aside with a free and loyal hand, and Lady Dalkeith followed Lord Rangor up the stairs with light and fleet footsteps.

He opened the door and she went in alone, advancing straight towards the bed, where Sir Roger was sitting erect, his face lit up by a spot of crimson upon either pale, thin cheek, his sunken eyes illumined with an unnatural brilliancy.

They were fixed upon the still beautiful woman, and his arms were outstretched to her.

Then Lord Rangor saw no more, for he

closed the door and went slowly down stairs with a deep longing in his soul that the love of such a noble woman should fall to his share, and an added feeling of sad belief that he would never have his wish; since the world, he thought, did not contain a second Lady Dalkeith, for whom he still had the deepest admiration, even though the love he had felt for her had not outlived her reception of the knowledge of it.

Had she shown sympathy with his devotion, things might have been different. As it was, she had, in a measure, cured him.

Celestine had gone to her own room, or rather that which the housekeeper was preparing for her, and Lord Rangor was standing in his study gazing at the picture of May Dalkeith, which it had so angered Sir Roger to find upon his walls.

He was holding a little conversation with himself as to how he would show it to Lady Dalkeith, and in what words he would offer it to her as a gift.

He felt a strange disinclination to part with it, but still he had told Sir Roger that his wife should have it, and he felt a glow of pleasure at the idea of how the possession of the picture would delight the mother's heart.

In the meantime that mother had entered her husband's room, and we left her advancing to his bedside, while he was sitting erect, his hollow eyes lit up with a strange glad light, his thin arms outstretched to her.

She was shocked at the sad change in him, and the feeling added an extra softness to her sweet, proud face.

"Margaret," he murmured, "I knew it was you; I heard you come—I felt it. Thank Heaven, you are in time! Are you Margaret, or an angel?" he continued, in a far-off voice. "Child, how sweet and beautiful you have grown. Have you really come back to me—really?"

"Yes, Roger, I am here; it is Margaret, and I have come to nurse you!"

And she placed both her hands in his, and stooping, kissed him upon the brow.

"And you will never leave me again? You will take care of May—poor, poor May? Ah, I must tell you about her! It is a sad story, but her mother's love will comfort her. You will be good to her, Margaret?"

"Indeed I will, if you will let me be so!" she answered, softly.

That is well. I won't talk of it now; I want to enjoy your presence. But you must hear; you must know it all. Let me hold you more tightly. How dark the room is growing. The evening is closing in, Margaret."

"No, not yet, Roger. See, the sun is red in the west; just as it was the day you asked me to be your wife. Do you remember it, my dear—how you told me I was the only woman who had ever touched your heart? I was thinking of it just now."

"So you are," he returned, with emotion; "the only one! I have never had a thought for any other—not one. And, Margaret," he was trembling strangely, and his hands clasped hers convulsively, "I have longed—longed to have you back—longed—and now you have come. And you will care for May—poor May? I thank Heaven you are here before—I die—Margaret. I must tell you. Listen!"

She leant eagerly forward to hear his words, which had raised a vague fear for her child in her heart; but not a sound came to her save his laboured breathing, and she looked more closely into his face.

A strange ashen hue was overspreading it; there was a wild flutter at the feeble heart!

Sir Roger fixed his eyes upon her with unspeakable sorrow and sank back insensible.

The shock and joy of his wife's return had been too much for the weak frame of Sir Roger Dalkeith.

His wife bent over him tenderly, felt his pulse and heart, and rang the bell sharply for assistance. It soon came to her, and all in the house were astir.

Doctors were sent for, remedies applied,

ready hands offering their services, and kind hearts their sympathy.

It was some hours before there was any change, then the sick man opened his eyes, and signed for his wife and Lord Rangor to come to him.

"That man told me that you care for her, that you have long cared for her," he said, with agitation. "And I wanted to tell you, Rangor, that it has all been my fault, and she has been blameless, quite blameless. And—and her life has been so barren of joy, so far, but now—now you will make her happy. She owes me no allegiance, none whatever."

And with trembling fingers he laid his wife's hand in that of Lord Rangor. A vivid flush spread over the Earl's fine features, while she turned pale as marble.

She drew her hand quietly and firmly away from him, and looked full into her husband's eyes.

"Roger," she said, in a clear, earnest voice, "who told you this falsehood? Lord Rangor and I are friends, nothing more, and never can be."

A gleam of gladness illumined the features of the Baronet.

"You are quite, quite sure? You are not saying it to spare me?"

"I am quite certain. I only speak the truth. Roger, you may believe me."

He did believe her. He sank back upon his pillows with an expression of peace and rest upon his features, and lay so still that Lady Dalkeith thought he was asleep. His eyes were closed, but he still had his senses about him.

She sat with her warm hand in his, and it was a long time before he stirred again, and Lord Rangor slipped quietly away, leaving the reconciled husband and wife together.

Suddenly he looked at her.

"Margaret, am I really forgiven?" he inquired, in a feeble voice. So feeble was it that it alarmed her fears.

"Freely and fully forgiven," she replied, softly. "And, Roger, I must share the blame with you. I was not yielding enough to you. I was too proud. I have often thought so in my far away home. Husband, I have need of forgiveness too."

"No, no, none," he returned, even more faintly, and drew her to him, and their lips met.

A glad light overspread his face and filled his eyes.

"I can die now," he whispered.

She could scarcely hear his words, so faint was his utterance. A fear overtook her. Would he die without telling her what he had to say about her child?

"Roger," she said, earnestly. "May! What of her? Is she not happy?"

A convulsive shudder passed through his frame and shook it. He repeated her name after his wife, blankly. Deep sorrow settled in upon the ashen face. It seemed as though he had forgotten the news he had to tell concerning her.

"Ask her to forgive me, too," he murmured, and fell asleep like a tired child.

Lady Dalkeith watched by his bedside, and once she heard him breathe the word "forgiveness." After that the clasp of his hand relaxed, and she realised that her husband's spirit had fled.

(To be continued.)

ORIENTAL HOSPITALITY.—The generous hospitality of Turkish women is too well-known to require mention. They always have sweetmeats and coffee served for any and all guests, and when they feel that the visit has lasted long enough, they clap hands, and the servant brings the second cup of coffee, and that is the signal. No guest can stay longer than to drink this. Sometimes the time between drinks is decidedly short. The women and children do not undress at night, but add a wadded night-robe to the clothes they already have on, and sleep thus summer and winter.



## THE VOICE OF THE TEMPTER.

—O—

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE announcement of Sir Eric's engagement to Mrs. Wyndham caused an astonishing amount of excitement, considering that so many people declared that they had foreseen it. The Miss McIntoshes seemed to be much amused by it; and Joe, with a saucy look up into Major Winter's face, reminded him that when that sort of thing once started in a house the infection usually spread.

George, the under-groom, wondered what Mr. Cyril would think of it, and thought of his promise to look after Miss Brenda. He thought of it still more when Sir Eric sent for him the next morning, and gave him some private orders which he was to keep to himself. They weighed upon his mind like a very large lump of lead, and made his usually merry face look so serious, that Mary asked him if he had been listening to a sermon and forgotten to digest it.

"No," he said, with a grin. "I want somebody to preach a sermon to the master. I'm sure he's very much in want of one!"

"A sermon wouldn't do him no good," said Mary, with great contempt. "A strait waistcoat is the thing for his complaint, and a lunatic asylum the fittest hospital."

As for Brenda she scarcely knew whether to be glad or sorry. She had often longed to get away from her guardian, and to live peacefully in a small house of her own; but now that Sir Eric would be glad to get rid of her, she began to think she would be very sorry to leave the beautiful old home where the happiest days of her life had been spent.

She stood on the terrace, looking sadly down on the well-arranged flower-beds, which seemed like a bright ribbon thrown on the green sward. Every year she and the gardener, Mr. Andrews, had consulted anxiously about the different colours to be used, and it was not pleasant to think that in all the Springs to come, she never would have a voice in the matter again. Somebody else would choose the flowers and pick the roses, and listen to the nightingales in the long shrubberies, and no one would think of her, except a few faithful servants, who were like old friends.

"A penny for your thoughts!" exclaimed Sir Eric, cheerfully, as he threw his arm round her, and looked down with a smile into her grave face. "What is the matter with you, Bren? If you've anything particular to ask me, say it out! I feel so amiable that I could embrace the whole world! I need to be very fond of you once!"

"Not really! But, Eric, instead of talking nonsense," drawing herself away, "would you mind telling me when you would like me to go away?"

"There's no hurry," he said, as he seated himself on the balustrade, and picked off a few dead leaves from the creepers.

"But I suppose it won't be so very long before you are married?"

"Of course not! Lillian has a few things to get, and the lawyers will take some time. 'Pon my soul, I almost wish that you could stay!"

"Stay!" she exclaimed, her breath almost taken away by her astonishment.

"Yes, if it weren't for one or two things," meditatively. "You're a brave little woman. You wouldn't run away from a fellow if anything went wrong?"

"I don't see how anything could go wrong," looking at him speculatively to see what he meant. "You've heaps of money, so you can't be sold up like a pauper; you've never forged, or stolen, or murdered! Eric, what is it?" she broke off in a fright, as his face grew deadly white.

"Nothing, child! nothing! Only you talk such stuff, Bren!" catching hold of her dress, as if to prevent her from running off, and

looking away from her across the undulating park, where the deer were browsing under the trees. "Have you ever seen anything?"

"Seen what?"

"Somebody who's not alive. A ghost, I suppose you'd call it!" in a low voice, with his head bent down, as if he were intensely interested in the evolutions of two earwigs.

"Never. You know I don't believe in them," simply.

"No, more did I!" bitterly. "You don't think Lillian would be afraid if she knew it? It wouldn't turn her against me!"

"Not if she is worthy of the name of woman! Why, Eric, if you loved a person at all, wouldn't you love him all the more if he were unhappy or uncomfortable about anything?"

"You're made of the right stuff, Bren; and I wish I were a Turk, so that I might marry you as well as Lillian!" recovering himself with an effort.

"You are very good!" breaking into a musical laugh; "but I wouldn't marry you if you had a million a-year, and no Lillian, or anything of that sort!"

He stood up, and looked her straight in the face.

"I have a Lillian, thank Heaven! but if I hadn't, you'd have had a very good chance of being Lady Farquhar. As it is, I'm forced to give you to Desborough—worse luck!"

"You may try to give me, but I won't be given! Can't you see, Eric, that my will is really much stronger than yours?" speaking very quietly, as if she were stating an uncontroversial fact.

"Stronger, is it?" with a peculiar smile. "Your will doesn't deserve the name, because it is always being checked by one scruple or another; whilst I let nothing stand between me and my desire. Now see if you've a chance!"

"A man who would let nothing stand between him and his desire would be little short of a fiend!" regarding him with grave eyes full of disgust.

"You exaggerate abominably! To-morrow—what will you say to-morrow?"

"What do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing!" and he walked off, leaving an uncomfortable sensation behind him.

Brenda wondered what he meant to do, and determined to be on her guard.

The moonlight ride was not much to her taste, and she had tried to get out of it, but her guardian had insisted on her journey in it, and told her politely that he would not stand any old-maidish airs. If she stayed at home, all his other guests would feel insulted, &c., &c.

She gave in, and made the best of a bad bargain by asking Lord Pinkerton to be her escort for the occasion.

The Viscount declared himself to be intensely flattered, and vowed he had never been so honoured in his life.

She told him that Cyril would be sure to wish to lend him Punchbowl, a beautiful thoroughbred, with plenty of go, and so nice; and, though Lady Manville looked infinitely pained at the whole proceeding, Brenda thought she should enjoy a delicious ride through the quiet lanes after the heat of the day was over.

Joe McIntosh came after her to ask her to play a game of tennis, which kept her thoroughly engaged till the gong sounded for luncheon.

Whilst Sir Eric was talking to his steward, Mrs. Wyndham was standing in the conservatory, her fingers idly playing with the long trails of taxonia, her blue eyes raised imploringly to Paul Desborough's stern face.

"You can't be so cruel! I know you can't!" she said, in a low voice, which shook with agitation. "How can I go to him as a pauper, when he has seen me all this time with plenty of money, carriages, horses, and toilettes from Worth? He would be amazed! What would he think?"

"Do you think I care what he thinks? Tell him the truth, and face the consequences!"

"I can't! Oh, Paul, be merciful!"

"It is not a question of mercy. Do you think I grudge the money?" with an accent of supreme contempt. "Can't you see that Eric Farquhar is my friend, and that you place me in a false position? I feel bound in honour to tell him everything, or else to quarrel with him, and turn my back on The Towers for ever!"

"And you can't do that because of Brenda," with a gleam of jealous fury, carefully suppressed. "You say a woman never understands a man's ideas of honour. Will you tell me how you can think of marrying this girl without telling her the story you are so anxious to repeat to Eric?"

Paul's face flushed as he threw back his head proudly.

"I should tell her everything. 'To the pure all things are pure.' Doesn't that come from the Bible? She would see the immense difference between an unfortunate mistake and an intentional sin."

"Don't; I can't bear it," writhing as if pain. "Is your heart a stone?"

"Give him up, and I'll let you have any amount you please."

"You are very anxious, that I should give him up. On one condition I would. I would directly," coming very close to him, and looking up into his disdainful face with the sweetest of looks on her own.

She slipped her hand within his arm, and hung upon it caressingly, looking wonderfully graceful and pathetic; but his expression only grew harder, without one softening touch.

"Paul, look at me!" she cried, stung to the quick. "If you won't have pity on me you shall live to be afraid of me!"

"How will you manage that?" contemptuously. "I'm not the sort of man to be easily frightened."

"If you do this thing to me," looking him steadily in the face, "I shall marry Sir Eric, but you will never marry Brenda—never, so long as you live!"

"Here he comes!"

She started back as if she had been struck, and stooped quickly as if to pick off the dead blossom of a fuchsia.

"Did I hear you say that Desborough should not marry my cousin?" asked Sir Eric, fixing his eyes on her bent head, as if he would gain some information from her back hair.

"I only say she doesn't care for him. Can you tell me that she does?" recovering her usual composure, and lifting her head, but not looking at him.

"I say she does," he answered shortly. "And, as I am anxious for this marriage to take place, I beg that you'll do nothing to prevent it."

"You give your orders right and left as if we were all a set of servants," pointing like a spoilt child.

"Is it not enough for me to tell you that I wish it?" he said, more gently. "It seems to me that you must have some special reason for opposing it."

"None at all," hastily. "Only Mr. Desborough is so certain sure that he will always be successful, and I never did encourage conceit."

"Conceit isn't half so bad as deceit," he answered, as Paul walked away with a weary expression of disgust on his chiselled features. "You'll promise not to keep anything back from me, Lillian, when you are my own little wife?"

"Am I to tell you how much I spend on powder and pocket-handkerchiefs?"

"Something rather more important," he said, gravely. "I shall expect to hear about the man you married. He may have shot himself, for all I know," with a sudden smile, "on account of your fearful firsations."

"Do talk of something pleasanter," she exclaimed, pettishly, as the blood rushed into her face. "You've not said a single nice thing to me since breakfast."

"Do you want me to tell you over and over again that you are the loveliest thing in creation?" he asked, fondly stroking her sunny hair.

She stood on tiptoe and kissed him, first on one cheek then the other, and, hardened man of the world as he was, he blushed like a girl.

"I wonder how many men you've kissed before," he said, involuntarily, as the thought flashed across his mind that Brenda could not have done such a thing for the world, even to Cyril.

"You ungrateful creature, I wish I could have them back!"

"Good gracious, there's the gong! Come into luncheon." He threw open the glass door, and waited for her to pass on.

His eye followed her dainty figure in its pretty gown of cream embroidered cambric, but his radiant happiness had already gone from him.

Now that Mrs. Wyndham was no longer out of reach, she did not seem half so enchanting as before.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

MRS. WYNDHAM'S small head was full of plots and plans that afternoon; but Sir Eric outwitted her completely. Being perfectly aware that for some reason, best known to herself, she did not wish Paul Desborough to marry Brenda, he kept her in the dark as to his real designs, and told her that the riding party was arranged as follows:—

Lady Pinkerton and Captain Porter, Miss Joe McIntosh and Major Winter, Miss Joe McIntosh and Mr. Desborough, Brenda Farquhar and Lord Pinkerton, Mrs. Wyndham and Sir Eric Farquhar.

"I wonder you allowed Brenda to choose for herself," she said, with a sarcastic smile. "It is not like you at all!"

"I must be magnanimous sometimes; and I had hard work to get her to consent to the whole thing. She is so absurdly prudish. Could you believe it?" he asked, in a tone of vexation, "though I have known her from a child—though I'm her cousin, her guardian, and all that, she maintains that I have no right to kiss her!"

"Incredible! And yet you are not so very ugly, are you?" with a mischievous glance.

"Not too ugly for you!" and he laughed, looking bright, and happy, and handsome as the Eric of a few years before.

They were taking a stroll under the trees in the park, where the cool, sweet shade under the rich foliage seemed most appropriate for love making.

There was not a sound to be heard, but the twitter of the birds answering each other from branch to branch, the distant coo of pigeons, and the hum of insects busily collecting stores of honey from the wildflowers.

It was a delicious afternoon, with a golden haze hanging over the still more golden corn in the valley, and giving a mysterious charm to the distant hills.

Sir Eric seemed influenced by the beauty and the peace of the scene before him, and gave himself up entirely to the charm of his companion.

It was like a dream to him to find himself lying at the feet of Mrs. Wyndham under the shadow of his own beeches—to think that soon she would belong to him entirely—that she would be by his side always, with her ineffable grace and exquisite smile to charm away all gloomy shadows—that the whole future, so far as he could tell, would be lit up by the sunshine of her presence.

It seemed too good to be true. He caught hold of both her tiny hands, and pressed his eager lips to their pink palms.

He talked a heap of nonsense, such as lovers delight in, and she listened graciously—content, so long as he never asked a question about the past.

She let her hand rest caressingly on his

dark hair, and as she looked down at him and studied his features closely, undisturbed by his ardent gaze, she wondered that the ghost of an old passion should be capable of rising between them, and preventing her from being madly in love with her future husband.

He was certainly very good to look at, a man such as any woman might be proud of; but there was an indefinable something in him which made her sometimes shrink with fear.

She was not more of a coward than many women are, and she had never been afraid of a man before; and yet Sir Eric, in spite of his fervent love, frightened her.

She could not account for the feeling, but there it was down in the depths of her heart, and she almost doubted if she could ever marry him.

Not a sign of this appeared in her manner, however, as she continued with him still from the force of long habit, and tried her power over him in a thousand ways.

The time passed on swift wings to Sir Eric, and he was much annoyed when the sound of several voices showed that some of the rest of the party had come to join them.

Lord Pinkerton was intensely amused at having unearthed the "spooney couple," or the "couple of spoons." Miss Joe McIntosh called them the pretty babes in the wood, and proposed covering them up with leaves.

Sir Eric jumped up as they threw a shower at him, and said it was time to move on.

They all strolled on together, Brenda laughingly reminding Lord Pinkerton that he must be on his best behaviour, or she would not let him ride with her that evening.

"Do you really mean to have him?" asked Mrs. Wyndham, in a low voice, "or is it a blind?"

"Of course I do. I actually asked him," with a slight blush at her own audacity.

"And what does Lady P. say?"

"That I'm the only girl she would trust him with," drawing herself up.

"Don't wait for me," called out Sir Eric. "I've got to speak a few words to Gilbert."

The others walked on, and he could see no sign of them when he came out of the steward's cottage.

With a slight smile curling his moustaches he walked back through the wood, looking to right and left, as if in search of something or somebody.

Presently he dived his head under the branches, and pushed his way through the undergrowth to a grassy path, where there was an ivied stump which he knew by heart.

Whilst talking to Mrs. Wyndham, and careless of any and everything else, he fancied he saw a pale blue skirt vanishing amongst the bushes.

His instinct had not misled him. There was Flossie crouching on the mossy seat, her poor little head resting against the broken stem of the old oak, her poor heart breaking in passionate sobs.

"What on earth's the matter?" he exclaimed in real consternation.

A convulsive start was the only answer, as she pressed her face still closer to the tree.

He stood perfectly still, watching her; and something like real unselfish pity stole into his heart.

Poor child! She had seen him with Lillian, and she did not like to find that he could flirt with someone else beside herself.

He had no idea of the hopes that Flossie had cherished, so he could not realise the depths of her bitter disappointment.

He would have burst out laughing at the idea of making her his wife; having no wish to connect himself so closely with the respectable old doctor.

She seemed a mere child to him, and he thought he could easily console her.

With this benevolent intention he went up to her, and touched her gently on the shoulder.

The touch seemed to wake her to the exigencies of the situation, and she started quickly to her feet, standing only a few

inches from the man she loved so truly, her heart beating so wildly that she almost thought that he must hear it, her poor little self shaking from head to foot.

"What is it, Flossie?" he asked again, rather puzzled by her manner.

"Nothing," she answered, dully; "only I thought you were different to what you are."

"How different?" raising his eyebrows.

"What do you mean?"

"I—I thought you wouldn't have told a falsehood for the world."

"I never do, unless I can't help it. I certainly never told you one."

"Yes, you did," her breast heaving, the rosy lips quivering. "You—you swore that you cared for me!"

"Is that all? And so I do. I'm awfully fond of you!"

"It isn't true!" feeling almost wild with pain as she stamped her foot. "You love that lady I saw you with just now!"

"Perhaps I do. But do you imagine I've got such a narrow heart that I can't find room in it for you as well?"

She raised her blue eyes to his for the first time in a glance of bewildered inquiry.

"You can't be in love with two people at once?"

"But I can—with half-a-dozen, for the matter of that!" and he drew her down on the seat and sat beside her.

She scarcely knew what was passing as she sat there, where she had been so exquisitely happy before, and wished that she could die.

Yes, in one moment she was ready to leave her home, her grey-haired father—who would be so lonely without her—the old villagers who looked for her visits as the flowers watch for the sun, and all the daily trifling pleasures of her quiet existence; she was anxious to leave them all, and die for the sake of a man who would forget her as soon as she was gone!

"Now listen to me, Flossie," he said, softly; for he felt that her attention was wandering in an unaccountable manner. "Your ideas want developing greatly. Is there any reason why you shouldn't be my dear little friend, even when you are married to some nice young fellow like George Willoughby, for instance?"

Every word was like a stab to her sensitive feelings; but she tried hard not to betray them.

"Do you think he would like it?" she said, slowly, too much occupied with her one fixed idea to be startled at having herself coupled with the Rector's son.

"Perhaps not!" with a short laugh. "Mrs. Wyndham would be fearfully angry if she saw me now with you."

"Then you had better go. I'm sure I don't want to keep you!" trying to get up.

"Are you quite sure? Haven't you been watching for me day after day?" He saw her wince, and ungenerously pressed his advantage.

"You pretend to be hard and cold and disagreeable," he went on, with his most winning smile. "But won't it be rather dull without me?"

Dull? Oh, heavens, if he only knew how utterly empty her life would be for the future! Her little fingers twisted themselves together, but she answered nothing. No torture, she fancied, even of the Christian martyrs of old could be worse than this, and this was for nothing—worse than nothing! Heaven grant her patience to bear it!

"Are you cold? What makes you shake so?"

"I am tired," she said heavily. "Let me go."

"Then forgive me, and make it up," stooping till his face nearly touched her own, and forcing her eyes to meet his. For one long minute she looked at him, as if it were a last lingering glance at the dying; and then, as his moustaches almost brushed her quivering lips, she sprang with one bound from her seat.

"What do you think I'm made of?" she cried, her pretty face all aflame. "Do you



think I'd ever have let you do it if I'd known!"

"I don't understand," and he got up slowly. "But it's late in the day, isn't it, to make a fuss?"

He could not have said anything crueler, for it was late in the day, and he could not tell how she loathed herself for ever having let him kiss her. Her pride rose rampant at his taunt, and she turned away without a word. As she dragged herself with heavy heart and lagging feet through ferns and briars, his pleasant voice came ringing through the wood, "good-bye, till we meet again!"

She shook her head, though there was no one to see. Never again would she grieve meekly by the broken oak; never again would she voluntarily listen to one word from his lips—and yet—and yet—the sun would have gone from the day, the blossom from the flower, and her life would be like a path through a desert, with a dull, grey sky overhead. He had always walked to the gate with her, but today he had left her to find her way as best she could.

In her agitation she missed the right turning, and wandered on, going farther and farther away from the gate without being conscious of it.

Her eyes were so blinded by tears that she often gave her head a knock against the lowest branches, or caught her feet in the briars which clung to her dress. But she felt no physical pain—all seemed swallowed up in the ache of her heart.

How vividly she remembered her first meeting with him when he arrived from his long stay abroad! He stopped so courteously to open the gate for her, and she thought he was the handsomest man she had ever seen; but when she mentioned the circumstance to her father he had seemed quite vexed with her, although it was the most trifling thing in the world—a gate opened by a neighbour.

What could be less important than that?

The next time, Sir Eric noticed her half-empty basket, and kindly made her come into the park to fill it with bluebells; and after that it seemed so natural to go through the Woodman's Gate, walk quietly under the delicious shade of the trees, and see a tall form coming towards her. And of all these later meetings the doctor had heard never a word.

She knew that she had done wrong—fatally wrong; but she did not trouble herself much about that at present. There would be plenty of time for penitence in the long empty years before her. Now nothing mattered, except that Sir Eric did not love her!

Faint and utterly exhausted, she might have wandered about till she dropped down like a hunted roe, but she chanced to meet the cowman's son, who led her back to the gate, and looked after her small drooping figure, wondering if the doctor's daughter had gone quite daft.

### CHAPTER XXX.

BRENDA had an overwhelming feeling of coming evil upon her that evening, as she sat down to dinner at the unusually early hour of seven. And yet there was nothing to account for it.

Sir Eric was particularly cheerful, which was not surprising, as he sat next to his enchantress, and knew that she would soon belong to him as his very own. He had totally forgotten his last parting with Flossie Whitehead, and was troubled with no qualms of remorse.

Mr. Desborough, on the other hand, was grave and apparently ill at ease, which caused Mrs. Wyndham to be jubilant. She supposed that he was terribly disappointed at having to be the escort of Jac McIntosh, and rejoiced that everything had been arranged so well without her interference.

This evening, which he had probably looked forward to as his one great opportunity, would

be entirely lost, and she could have laughed aloud with triumph over his dejection.

Lady Manville sat at the head of the table, looking so portentously grave that the Viscount scarcely dared to address her; but every now and then he threw a laughing glance across at Brenda, when she said something rather saucy, to remind her that he would have plenty of time to pay her out when they were alone together for two hours.

"Two hours!" she exclaimed, in horror. "I shan't think of staying out till eleven!"

"For goodness sake let us start before we fix the hour for coming back!" cried Sir Eric, from the bottom of the table. "This is Liberty Hall, as I've often told you, and supper may be kept waiting till midnight."

"My dear Eric," began Lady Manville, in a tone of gentle expostulation, "do you think any respectable person would be out on the roads after eleven?"

"I shall be able to tell you better after to-night is over," he answered, with an amused smile. "We all call ourselves severely respectable, so whatever we do is sure to be right!"

"Severely respectable!" exclaimed Joe McIntosh. "I don't know that I was ever called that before; but I daresay I've improved since I've been here!"

"Under my able tuition?" murmured the Major.

"That's right, Joe!" cried Sir Eric, approvingly. "I've done my best for you, haven't I? My cousin is the only person in the house who doesn't give me credit for my efforts."

"Because, if you mean to improve me, you go such a funny way to work," Brenda said, with a little nod.

There was a general laugh at this, and soon afterwards the ladies left the room to put on their habits.

Brenda found on her pin cushion a little note from her guardian, begging her to write out a list of things wanted in the stables, as one of the grooms was going to start early in the morning for London.

His excuse for troubling her was that Matthews the coachman wrote such an illegible hand, and he had not time to see to it himself.

The list was enclosed, and proved so difficult to decipher that it certainly would not have been wise to send it to a tradesman.

It took much longer than she expected, and by the time she had written it out most carefully, with the necessary note to accompany it, Mary told her that the horses had come round.

As she was in a hurry of course everything went wrong; hooks stuck in their eyes, and nothing would induce them to move; buttons on which much depended chose this very moment for coming off; a seam had actually given way in her habit.

"It doesn't matter," she said, with a smile, as Mary looked almost as if she were going to cry, for most mistresses would have lain the blame of all these mishaps on her shoulders. "If Lord Pinkerton happens to have a cigarette between his lips anyone might keep him waiting till it was finished—and even then, he would be only too happy to begin another."

She ran lightly down the stairs and crossed the hall with a quick step, when one of the footmen told her that the horses were waiting at the side door. She was very much surprised, but hurried down the long passage, drawing on her gloves as she went. The present fashion in habits destroys their grace, but makes their length better adapted for walking.

Sir Eric was at the door waiting to put her up. The gas was not lighted anywhere about, and it was very dark. Punchbowl was the other side of Satanella, with its rider already in the middle; and George, the second groom, was holding his own horse, whilst another was standing at the mare's head.

"Knowing what a very particular lady you are," said Sir Eric, with a smile, "I've given

you George to take care of you, and I am going to meet you later on with Lillian."

"But really, we shan't want George, shall we, Lord Pinkerton?" she said, as she settled herself in her saddle. She turned her head as she made the remark, and then gave a violent start. "Mr. Desborough! I never said I was going to ride with you!" she exclaimed, angrily.

"Pinkerton had gone off with Miss McIntosh, and I was only too proud to stand in his shoes," said Paul, looking straight in front of him.

"I don't believe it! He wouldn't have thrown me over—even if he had wanted to!"

"There is no use in fighting against facts," said Sir Eric, quietly. "Jac McIntosh is just the sort of girl, to be death on a lord."

"This is your doing, Eric," resentfully.

"My dear girl, what could I have to do with it? I was not in Jac's confidence."

"If you wish it, Miss Farquhar, I'll get off," suggested Desborough taking one foot out of the stirrup. "After all a quiet evening in the house might be just as nice, especially if Lady Manville took her usual nap."

"Really I think you are unnecessarily rude to Paul. Why weren't you down in time to settle things for yourself? Lillian will be here directly, but all the others are gone."

"Well, I suppose we had better start," she said gravely.

To stay behind with Mr. Desborough would look odd, and to refuse to go with him would be an unnecessary insult; but she felt that, somehow or other, she had been "done," and was proportionately cross. They rode slowly out of the yard, followed by the groom, whilst Sir Eric looked after them with a strange complexity of feelings. He had sent his ward off to meet her fate. He had lied and tricked, and deceived. He had stifled the instincts of a gentleman; he had trampled under foot a man's ordinary code of honour; he had sunk to the lowest depths, for he had betrayed a sacred charge. And now the full enormity of his conduct stared him in the face.

It was not remorse; it was not sudden detestation of his own meanness; it was not pity for the girl whom he was sacrificing to his furious jealousy that made him start forward with the intention of calling back the two riders, but it was that strange complexity of feeling that made him always hover between the extremes of love and hate with regard to the girl who had been intrusted to his care.

When she looked at him with the utmost scorn in her honest eyes—when she emphasized the difference between her own utter innocence and Lillian Wyndham's well-practised fascinations—when she let him see that, in spite of his imperious way and domineering assumption of authority she never bent to his will, then he hated her, with a fierce, vindictive hatred.

But there were times when she attracted him forcibly, not only by the pure, sweet beauty of her face—the unstudied grace of every movement—but by her sunny, light-heartedness, her fearless love of truth, her proud contempt of meanness, and by that frank and simple innocence which he affected to despise. It flashed across him now with sudden force that she was infinitely superior to every other specimen of womanhood that he had gathered round him, and he had given her up to Desborough of his own free will!

He had taken the initiative, and absolutely thrown her into the fellow's eager arms in order to clear the ground for himself and Mrs. Wyndham. But as he stopped back with a frown, he told himself that it was too late to repent. As he had begun so he must go on, and only a fool would hesitate.

He went in to see when Mrs. Wyndham would be ready; and with a sudden change of mood, smiled to think how annoyed she would



[A CONVULSIVE START WAS HER ONLY ANSWER, AS FLOSSIE PRESSED HER FACE STILL CLOSER TO THE TREE.]

be when she found out what clever scheme he had hatched without her assistance.

Meanwhile Brenda rode on through the dewy park, where the trees looked as black as ebony in contrast with the silver flood of moonlight, and Paul Desborough said but little to break the current of her thoughts.

It was a perfect night, when even the most prosaic man on earth must feel that there is something nobler and better beyond the practical region of cold fact, as every common object around him was beautified by the soft, loving touch of the moonbeams.

Brenda gave herself up to the influences of the hour, and lost the angry expression about her pretty mouth.

She felt that she had been insufferably rude to her present companion, who, at least, had done no wrong by offering to be her escort, whilst her anger ought properly to have been reserved for Lord Pinkerton, who had deserted her so shamefully.

It was very odd of Eric to send a groom with them; but George's presence gave her a comfortable sense of security, and she ventured, in consequence, to be very gracious to Paul, who seemed in an unusually humble frame of mind.

"How odd it is that we've never asked each other which way we should like to go, and yet here we are mounting this steep lane as if by mutual consent," she said, with a smile, as she looked up at the delicate tracery of the boughs above her head.

"You forget that Farquhar has promised to join us, so we are bound to go in one direction."

"But did he mean it? It was Mrs. Wyndham's idea to have a moonlight ride, and I don't think she would consent to having her *titic-a-tit* changed into a prosaic quartette."

"Why prosaic? A man must be nothing better than a clod if he isn't taken out of his own dull self by such a night as this!"

"I only meant that she would like to be alone with Eric."

"And so they would be practically. I should not interfere with them either by a look or a thought, if they were kind enough to go a head."

"But for Mrs. Wyndham it would destroy the romance of the whole thing."

"Her sentiment is not of the deepest. I don't think it would suffer."

"You knew her, didn't you, before you met her here?"

"I did know her," in a low voice; "but for Heaven's sake don't talk of her to-night!"

"Why not to-night? Doesn't the moonlight suggest the idea of confidences," feeling that she was treading on dangerous ground, and yet spurred on by most natural curiosity.

"It suggests the idea of confidences between two people who are drawn together by an innate sympathy, who have been longing, perhaps, for a moment like this—who feel as if it were easier to talk in the moonlight."

"No; it is easier to chatter in the broad light of day," she broke in, rather brusquely, for his tone was decidedly sentimental.

"I wasn't talking of chattering," he answered indignantly, and relapsed into silence.

She was amused at the effect she had produced, but thought it just as well to resume conversation, lest the eloquent silence of the moonlit scene should have too softening an effect on his heart.

"Does it ever strike you that Eric's violent love for Mrs. Wyndham won't last?" she began presently.

"When you are by?"

"I have nothing to do with it. He hates me! I should have thought you would have seen that!"

"He thinks he does; but that's not the same thing. One day he will realise it, and dash out his brains against the nearest wall!"

"What nonsense! Even if he liked me, which I positively deny, why should he kill himself?"

"Because it would be too late. We've go

to stop here," he added hurriedly, as George dismounted to open the gate. "This is our place of meeting."

"The Miller's Rest? Oh, I remember it so well," her face softening, as she turned her mare's head to the left, and rode slowly up to the porch. "I won't get down, thank you," she said to the landlady, who had come out on to the step.

"But the tea is waiting for you, ma'am, in the best sitting-room!" expostulated Mrs. Best, as an ostler ran out from the stables.

"Just as you like!" said Desborough, carelessly; "only you know Farquhar is always unpunctual."

"And a cup of tea is so refreshing, suggested the landlady, insinuatingly.

It did seem absurd to wait out there, so Brenda unwillingly dismounted, walking slowly up the stairs, and thinking of Cyril at every step.

There were a few bunches of white roses peeping in at the window, and the table was only laid for two, just as if it were for him and for her.

Oh! if she could have changed Paul Desborough into Cyril Farquhar, she could have waited very patiently for Sir Eric!

(To be continued.)

DIFFICULTY OF EXCELLENCE.—It is certain that if every one could early enough be made to feel how full the world is already of excellence, and how much must be done to produce anything worthy of being placed beside what has already been produced—of a hundred youths who are now poetising, scarcely one would feel enough of courage, perseverance, and talent to work quietly for the attainment of a similar mastery. Many young painters would never have taken the pencil in hand if they could have felt, known, and understood, early enough, what really produced a master like Raphael.





[A FATEFUL ACCIDENT AND A FATEFUL RESCUE.]

NOVELLETTE.]

## A FAMILY SKELETON.

—30—

## CHAPTER I.

ACROSS London Bridge, going with the tide that flows citywards in the morning to ebb away from it again late in the afternoon. Fresh young faces, bland, well-to-do, middle-aged ones, hawk-eyed, thin-lipped, elderly visages, sleek prosperity, and gaunt poverty elbowing each other on the bridge, all going citywards, all more or less actuated by the greed o' gold.

This human tide, so restless, so unceasing, carrying, perchance, far darker, stranger, sadder secrets in its breast than the swift flowing waters beneath, was full of attraction for a young fellow standing upon the famous bridge for the first time, in the fresh morning sunlight.

Valise in hand, Will Meredith looked keenly around him, pausing for a moment in one of the recesses much frequented by idlers. The atmosphere was clear, the sky overhead blue; the river, with its long perspective of wharves and warehouses, had a certain beauty of its own not to be ignored. Grimy London had for once washed her face and assumed a smiling aspect.

A delicious sense of expansion and new life came to the young man with this, his first view of London. The vastness of the great city, its mighty teeming life, and well-nigh boundless resources came home to him with a force and intensity that thrilled him with exultant feeling, and set his heart beating rapidly.

Would the modern Babylon prove kind and favourable to him or the reverse? Having reached it, would he be permitted to win either fame or fortune, to realise the ambitious dreams so long cherished within his heart?

Will Meredith was tall and slim, with crisp brown hair waving round a well-shaped head, clear dark brown eyes, at once dreamy and perceptive in expression, regular features, and a resolute, handsome mouth, scarcely concealed by the silky moustache he wore.

The only son of a provincial artist, Will Meredith had inherited a double portion of his father's talent. Upon the death of the latter, Will had resolved to come to London and fight his way to the front, if possible, instead of remaining in the provinces, where no congenial society, no atmosphere of art stimulated and encouraged the aspiring student.

A friend had secured lodgings for him with the use of a studio in the vicinity of West Kensington. An artist whose house was too large for him, who, in other words, lacked money, had consented to receive Will Meredith beneath his roof on very moderate terms, and it was towards this gentleman's residence that he was making his way from London Bridge station.

A legacy of seventy pounds a-year, bequeathed to him by a maiden aunt, imparted a certain amount of confidence to the art-student. With that to fall back upon he was in no danger of actual want, should success at first refuse to be wooed and won by him.

He walked on rapidly for some distance, amused and interested by all that he saw and heard going on around him. Then, beckoning to the driver of a crawling hansom, he was driven through the crowded thoroughfares towards his new residence in West Kensington.

It proved to be a semi-detached Queen Anne villa, standing back from the road in its own well-kept garden, sufficiently picturesque in aspect to have justified an artist in making it his abode.

Ere he could knock and ring, the front door was opened by a little German maid, who, somehow, reminded him of a Dresden china figure. She was not more than seventeen, with big blue eyes, a fine clear skin, pouting baby lips, a little round chin with a dimple in

it, and soft brown hair surmounted by a big white cap edged with lace.

Gretchen's face was wreathed in smiles as she nodded her top-heavy cap at Will Meredith in answer to his inquiry.

"Yes, this is Mr. Neville's house," she said. "Please to come in, sir. We have been expecting you. The ladies are in the drawing-room."

After informing her that his luggage would arrive later on, Will Meredith followed Gretchen into the pretty flower-scented drawing-room. It was vacant, however, save for a magnificent collie, which rose and approached the new-comer in friendly, inquiring fashion. Gretchen darted away, and he could hear her calling in shrill, yet subdued tones,—

"Mam'selle, Mam'selle, come down! It is the new young gentleman, and there is no one in the drawing-room to receive him. I cannot find Miss Mavis anywhere."

Stifling a laugh the "new young gentleman" turned to greet a lady who entered the room at that moment, having run downstairs in hot haste in response to Gretchen's summons—a plump little Frenchwoman of thirty, with small, regular features, bright brown eyes, and smooth, glossy, dark brown hair.

"Oh, Mr. Meredith! But I must apologise for there being no one here to welcome you on your arrival," she said, brightly, extending a plump white hand to him. "My brother-in-law is in the studio, and my niece must have gone out. I am so sorry."

"Not at all," rejoined Will Meredith, with a smile.

He had an idea that he should get on very well with this frank, lively little Frenchwoman.

"I hope to be with you *en famille*. You will kindly dispense with all formality, so far as I am concerned."

"*Tres bien*," said Mam'selle, her keen, bright glance resting approvingly upon the young fellow. "We are homely people, and it will be a relief to find you willing to adapt your-

self to our ways, while you will prove a welcome addition to our small family circle. Here is my brother-in-law, Sydney, let me introduce you to Mr. Meredith."

A big, handsome man, still on the right side of forty, came forward and shook hands cordially with the young artist, who thought he had seldom beheld a finer and more imposing physique than that of his new host.

Sydney Neville had preserved his good looks intact. His dark hair still waved abundantly over his broad white brow; his large eloquent eyes had lost none of their youthful fire; his features were mobile and expressive; his manner full of *bonhomie*.

A large, generous, noble physique, indicative of a gifted, ample nature, keenly alive to pleasurable influences and social joys—a man whom everyone liked and admired, although he worked only by fits and starts, when he felt in the mood, dismissing criticism by his sunny, genial manner and rare, material gifts—the sort of man for whom a woman would cheerfully sacrifice herself to any extent, just because he was so graceful—and so charming!

"You will think ours a cosmopolitan household, Meredith," he remarked, as the two men proceeded towards the studio that Will was to share. "Gretchen is, of course, German. We brought her over with us a year ago. My sister-in-law is French. I married a Frenchwoman, and, when my wife died, seven years ago, her sister undertook the management of my house, since Mavis, my only daughter, is hardly old enough to assume so much responsibility. We get on very well as a rule, considering our different nationalities. Now, I fancy if your easel stands in that corner you will obtain a good light. We can have the studio divided by curtains, should you prefer such an arrangement."

Will Meredith was introduced to Mavis Neville at luncheon, when she glided noiselessly into the dining-room.

"My daughter, Mavis," said the artist. Will, glancing swiftly up, saw a slender, graceful little form clad in grey cashmere, a pale, sweet, thoughtful face; eyes like dewy violets, their dark curved lashes resting on the soft rounded cheek; a tremulous rosebud mouth, masses of dark hair simply plaited, twining in soft rings about the pretty ears and forehead, not, strictly speaking, a lovely face, but one with an indescribable charm that grew upon those who beheld it slowly, but surely.

Mavis Neville seemed painfully shy and nervous. She said but little during the meal, and Will Meredith found his attempts at conversation in that quarter a decided failure.

"Nice little thing!" he reflected, summing her up rapidly with the cool efficiency, the confidence in his own judgment peculiar to nineteenth-century young men, who never err on the side of modesty; "but shy, awfully shy! Not much in her. Precisely like nine hundred and ninety girls of a similar age! Women are, as a rule, sadly wanting in character and individuality!"

Then he gave all his attention to Sydney Neville, whose conversation—witty, animated, ranging over many topics—was always worth listening to.

Mavis disappeared when they rose from the table, and Meredith saw little more of her that day.

As he shook down amidst his new surroundings, however, and became better acquainted with each member of the household, it dawned upon him by degrees that Mam'selle, as every one called her, held the reins of office only as a sinecure. The ruling spirit of the small establishment was, in reality, Mavis.

It was she who caused the wheels of domestic life to revolve smoothly while deferring to her aunt's authority in everything.

Mam'selle could perform marvels, from cooking a savoury omelette to trimming a bonnet in a style calculated to drive an Englishwoman wild with envy; but she was

incapable of sustained effort, of orderly, systematic work and rule. She bustled and chattered, and flew from place to place, commencing half-a-dozen things, which Mavis quietly finished.

But for the latter, meals would have been unpalatable, rooms left littered and untidy. Thanks to her efforts, supplementing Mam'selle's, all went smoothly.

Mavis had plenty of character and individuality concealed beneath that shy, gentle exterior.

As he discovered this, and began to admire and feel interested in her, Will Meredith made an effort to win the girl's confidence.

In time he succeeded in overcoming her reserve; and as she grew to regard him less as a stranger, more as a member of the family, her attitude towards the young man became more friendly and familiar.

"What a glorious morning! I think I shall treat myself to a holiday. All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy; and I have had very little play lately."

Will Meredith had flung himself into an easy chair in the artist's drawing-room, where he sat, the picture of lazy enjoyment; his long legs stretched out at full length, watching Mavis Neville arrange some half-blown roses in the vases on the mantelpiece.

June sunlight was flooding the room with its warm radiance; through the open window, borne on the soft breeze, came a sound of music. All nature seemed full of rich, rejoicing life. It was wondrous to make the old feel young again, to set youth longing for pleasure in some shape or form rather than work.

"I think you deserve some relaxation," said Mavis, gravely, glancing at him from beneath her long lashes. "You have worked hard ever since coming here, Mr. Meredith. Now, I should not say this to papa; he is only too glad to seize upon any pretext to escape from the studio and make holiday. He is worse than a schoolboy, but with you it is different!"

"I don't want to go alone, though," replied Will, plaintively. "That would be awfully slow work. I was about to express a wish that you, Miss Neville, and Mam'selle would accept me as your escort to Richmond. We could drive there, and go for a row on the river. It would be very jolly. I hope you will not refuse to go. I shall regard your consent in the light of a personal favour."

The deep, musical voice, the pleading accent, caused some fine chord in the girl's nature to vibrate with a swift, sweet ecstasy, akin to pain in its passionate, vague yearning. Her dark blue eyes grew suddenly radiant.

"I should like it so much!" she said, gladly. "Of course I will go if auntie is agreeable."

She flitted away in search of Mam'selle, who readily agreed to accompany her. A pleasure excursion, taken in conjunction with a nice little dinner, suited the Frenchwoman admirably.

Sydney Neville, painting industriously in the studio, raised no objection to the proposed trip to Richmond.

"Go and enjoy yourself, little one," he said, benignly, to Mavis. "I can trust Meredith to take good care of you. Youth is the time for enjoyment. Old fogies, like myself, can afford to stay at home and keep house. It is all we are fit for."

He looked so unlike an old fogey in his splendid vigorous prime that Mavis laughed as she kissed him, before joining the others. Mam'selle trotted downstairs, a picture of neat, compact elegance; well-gloved, well-shod, looking more like a pretty plump partridge than ever.

"Mam'selle, you are what Dickens would call 'a compact enchantress!'" exclaimed Will Meredith, laughingly, as he waited around her with hands uplifted in admiration. The two carried on a perpetual brisk fire of badinage, in which sometimes one and sometimes the other got the best of it.

"Your toilet is simply ravishing—those draperies a work of art!"

"*Mauvais garçon!*" retorted Mam'selle, "to utter such flatteries. I was but two hours yesterday throwing this skirt together. A *pouf* here, a tuck there. *Voilà!* it is done, and your Englishwoman cannot excel it!"

"Auntie never will put in solid work, close stitches," said Mavis, entering the room. "She is all *poufs* and pins, and tacking-cotton. Some day, when she is caught in a high wind, there will be a terrible catastrophe. She will literally fall to pieces!"

Mavis looked delightfully lovely in her dress of lawn-coloured material, trimmed with knots of pale blue ribbon, and wide shady hat to correspond with the dress. She generally chose soft neutral tints, and they became her well. Will Meredith never forgot that day, it was so full of deep, exquisite enjoyment.

The splendid weather, the sense of dawning love in his heart for the fair girl who sat beside him, lifting her starry eyes to his now and then—eyes in whose liquid depths he could see his own happiness reflected—were all sufficient. Past and future were lost sight of in the blissful present; and Mavis, yielding to the exhilarating influences of the day, forgot to be shy and reserved.

She laughed and talked gaily as they went along, her quaint, wise sayings, demure fun, and flashes of keen insight, revealing more and more of her true character to the man who was rapidly becoming her lover.

There was such a strange blending of child-like, fresh simplicity and grave, premature wisdom about Mavis. It formed her principal charm—one that perplexed Will Meredith. He was at a loss to know how and where she had acquired her knowledge of life's sterner, sadder aspects, to account for the shadow that occasionally crossed her face. Her home-life appeared to be sheltered, peaceful, happy. Was it possible that a skeleton lurked in the background?

Mam'selle refused to go upon the water, of which she had a profound horror. Mavis might go for an hour's row, she said; and she would stroll about the hotel grounds until the pair returned—an arrangement for which Will Meredith silently blessed her.

Once afloat, he rent the boat through the water smoothly and swiftly with long, measured strokes. It was so pleasant to have Mavis there, sitting opposite to him, steering, to watch the delight in her eyes as, every now and then, he secured some fresh spoil for her in the shape of water-lilies or forget-me-nots.

"This always seems to me an apt emblem of life," he remarked, meaningly, "or rather of what life should be when two people come together—for better or worse." If the bark is to glide smoothly, the man must row while the woman steers. Rowing requires strength, steering tact; thus their respective parts are duly allotted to them."

Mavis laughed and blushed. "What a pretty idea!" she said, softly, as he handed her a dripping bunch of turquoise blossoms.

"The lovers' flower!" he remarked. "Forget-me-not. Few of us are fortunate enough to obtain what is the emblem of, namely, the love that never dies."

"True love cannot die," murmured the girl. "It is immortal."

"I am presumptuous enough to hope that such love may fall to my share—some day," he went on. "Nothing less would satisfy me. To be content with half measures in love seems to me to imply something wrong in yourself or the object of affection."

"As you say," she assented. "True love should go all lengths, and be capable of any amount of self-sacrifice."

"I am glad we share the same sweet creed," he said, earnestly, and her eyes dropped before his, into which the lovelight had suddenly leaped.

What might have followed had not a great



lumbering barge nearly run them down in passing, must needs remain unrecorded.

"Clumsy brute!" exclaimed Will Meredith, wrathfully, dedicating this compliment, without permission, to the barge, who promptly returned it with interest.

A few strokes soon placed them beyond the source of annoyance, however, but the conversation, when resumed, took a less personal turn.

The pleasant little dinner was followed by a delicious drive home through the calm, peaceful summer evening.

As soon as they reached home, Mavis, her hands full of flowers, went in quest of her father. Five minutes later she returned to the drawing-room, a look of vague terror in her eyes, of some haunting misery.

"Papa has—has been compelled to go away for several days," she faltered. "I am so sorry. I had no idea of this when we started."

## CHAPTER II.

"I know no member of your family has been taken ill!" replied Will Meredith, with genuine solicitude.

"Oh, no!" said Mavis. "Papa has—to take these journeys occasionally, at very short notice. I don't suppose he will be away long, however. At least, I hope not."

Somehow the artist's mysterious absence cast a gloom over the household. Gretchen went about her work looking voluble, and saying very little. Even bright, cheery Mam'selle appeared uneasy and distraite.

Mavis wandered from room to room when she thought herself unobserved—pale, sorrowful, full of nervous apprehension. Although in his presence they strove to appear as if nothing were amiss, Will Meredith could not fail to detect the changed atmosphere, and to wonder at it.

He was sleeping soundly on the third night of Sydney Neville's absence from home, when a noise below awoke him, and he sat up in bed to listen.

He fancied that he heard the voice of Mavis raised in a perfect agony of supplication. Then, after a low, indistinct murmur of other voices, and a sound of closing doors, all became quiet again.

Springing out of bed he struck a match, and looked at his watch. It was just two o'clock. As a rule Mavis retired early. What could have happened to cause her to be about in the dead of the night?

Going down to breakfast the next morning he glanced keenly at Mavis, who sat opposite to him. The sweet face that had grown so dear to him of late looked pale and weary; but there was an expression of evident relief on it. Mam'selle, too, was her old, bright self again.

"My brother-in-law returned late last night, Mr. Meredith," she remarked, as she handed the young man his coffee. "He is somewhat fatigued this morning. I expect I shall have to send his breakfast up to him."

Will made some reply, but refrained from any embarrassing questions. Ten minutes later Sydney Neville entered the breakfast-room, and greeted its occupants with his accustomed geniality.

The artist looked haggard and fatigued, as if travelling at short notice did not agree with him.

There were dark lines beneath his eyes, his hand shook like an aspen-leaf, while his high spirits and rapid flow of conversation seemed forced and spasmodic, every now and then suffering a relapse.

What struck Will Meredith most was Sydney Neville's manner towards his daughter. In addressing her his tone became more than usually tender. There was even something humble and conciliatory about it, as if he sought to make amends for some wrong committed.

The two artists worked industriously at

their respective easels through the morning, Sydney Neville making only a vague, passing allusion to his recent journey.

Will Meredith went in to luncheon in a sanguine, agreeable, well-satisfied frame of mind, to have it completely wrecked by the unexpected presence at that meal of Mr. Luke Tressider.

Luke Tressider was the only son of a wealthy Cornish squire, a big, broad-shouldered fellow, with a rosy, clean-shaven face, light brown hair, cropped mercilessly close, and good-humoured, but somewhat expressionless features.

He looked aggressively prosperous and wealthy. His clothes were of the most fashionable cut and style, his laugh loud and frequent.

Will Meredith, scenting a rival, hated him instinctively, each little attention paid by the Cornishman to Mavis tending to increase the feeling of hatred.

A mutual friend had introduced Luke Tressider to the Nevilles some months previous, and, little as he cared for art and bright, clever Bohemian society—for anything, in fact, save athletics and "the fancy"—Tressider had become a frequent visitor. The West Kensington villa evidently possessed some special attraction for him.

He had been away from town lately. This was his first visit since Will Meredith's arrival.

The coolness and antipathy proved mutual, each young man inwardly resenting the other's established position.

A splendid bouquet of hothouse flowers, Luke Tressider's offering to Mavis, especially aroused Meredith's ire. If glances could wither, those delicate blossoms would have drooped and died immediately.

"If that great, brainless Cornish idiot is coming here often, to sit and stare Mavis out of countenance, I shall feel tempted to kick him!" he reflected, viciously, on his way back to the studio, to perpetrate a very bad afternoon's work indeed.

Yet his peace of mind was fated to suffer still more by reason of the big Cornishman's frequent visits.

Will Meredith detested his society, the more because he was not in a position openly to resent it.

Big, ruddy, good-tempered Luke Tressider, with his strident laugh, easy, self-satisfied manner, and well-filled pockets, became the young artist's *blanc noir*.

Will was very sensitive on the score of his own poverty, and to see this man lavishing hothouse flowers and fruit, concert tickets, new music, and so on, upon Mavis and Mam'selle, chafed and irritated him to the verge of madness; and the head and front of the Cornishman's offending was, in Will Meredith's eyes, his marked predilection, his scarcely concealed *tendresse* for Mavis Neville.

Not that Mavis ever flirted with him. Even

Meredith, rendered Argus-eyed by jealousy, could not accuse her of anything approaching coquetry when Luke Tressider was present. She laughed at his clumsy sallies and weak-kneed jokes. He seemed to afford her a deal of quiet merriment, while she accepted his attentions as a matter of course, without apparently attaching much importance to them.

Her father's friends were chiefly masculine, and from a child she had been accustomed to receive more or less homage from them all.

"Mr. Tressider has not called for two days," remarked Mam'selle, one evening when, dinner over, they were assembled in the drawing-room.

"Indeed," replied Will Meredith, sarcastically, as he ransacked a music portfolio in search of a song he wished Mavis to sing. "How can he be so cruel as to deprive us of the light of his presence for so long a period? Yet we can hardly expect, I suppose, to enjoy a monopoly of his interesting society, since he is so much in request!"

Mavis laughed.

"I think men often detest each other quite as heartily as girls are credited with doing," she said. "You are very hard upon poor Mr. Tressider. He cannot help his lack of brilliancy!"

"Rich Mr. Tressider, you mean," he replied, in the same tone, glancing swiftly at Mavis as she sat there in the fading light, a dainty little figure robed in lace and muslin, some fragrant lilies fastened in her soft, wavy brown hair. "If Nature has left his brain somewhat empty she has kindly filled his purse, and that is an admirable substitute in the world's eyes. Moreover, since you defend him, he is doubly rich."

"Oh, I am always loyal to my friends!" laughed the girl.

"And you include him among them?"

"Why not?" she asked, demurely, as the reason of all this jealous dislike suddenly dawned upon her, filling her with mingled surprise and delight. "Papa's friends are mine, and, since you are of them, why should you complain?"

"Thanks; but I don't care to be placed on a footing with Tressider in your esteem," was the ungrateful response. "Have you ever noticed how very limited his phraseology is? It seems odd that a man, presumably well-educated, should be compelled to round off every other sentence with—'that sort of thing, don't you know?'"

His apt mimicry of poor Tressider's favourite phrase and tone set them all off laughing.

"How uncharitable we are becoming!" said Mavis, seating herself at the piano. "After all, he is not more vacuous or hard up for suitable words than the majority of men about town. Have you decided yet what I am to sing?"

He placed before her the words and music of the sweet old song, "Drink to me only with thine eyes," and she sang it at his request, her fresh, sweet, thrilling young voice and silvery notes deepening the spell already created by her gentle beauty.

Will Meredith, hopelessly in love, encouraged anew by the absence of his rival, bent over her, coldness and jealous doubts forgotten, pleading for song after song, drinking in the melody with rapt passionate delight, until Mam'selle waking up suddenly from her after-dinner nap brought the blissful period to an end.

Will Meredith was about to enter the drawing-room on the next morning in search of Mavis, who had promised him a two hours' sitting for the picture he was engaged upon. Opening the door gently, his heart well-nigh stood still at the scene he beheld.

In a chair by the lace-curtained window sat Luke Tressider. Bending over him, one little hand resting lightly upon his broad shoulder, was Mavis Neville. The Cornishman's face was averted, so that Will Meredith could not read its expression, but the girl's attitude was evidently one of timid entreaty.

Ere she could look round at the sound of the opening door, the intruder had disappeared, his mind in a state of chaos.

"Great Heaven, how I have been deceived in that girl!" was the first coherent thought that darted through the young man's brain. "I deemed her pure, unworldly, incapable of accepting that fellow for his wealth. Poor ridiculous fool, not to know that every woman has her price! How amazed she must have felt that day when we were talking of love as all-sufficient in itself and I failed to detect the lie, the deceit, in those beautiful eyes. She is aware of my love for her—she must be, although I have never avowed it. My poverty held me back. Luke Tressider with his money-bags will have an easy walk over. No need for him to be diffident in his wooing."

Standing alone in the deserted dining-room, with his hard, merciless thoughts of the girl he both loved and hated, Meredith heard Luke Tressider's heavy footsteps descend the stairs, heard the front door close behind him, then

followed him in fancy as he went on his way, a glad, exultant wooer.

"Oh, Mr. Meredith, I am so sorry. I quite forgot my promise to sit for you this morning. Is it too late?"

Mavis stood before him, a certain dewy tenderness in her dark blue eyes, a little smile curving her lips. She had not expected to find him in the dining-room. His presence there had recalled to mind her broken engagement.

"Yes, it is too late," he replied, abruptly. "I came to remind you of your promise, Miss Neville, a little while ago, but you were entertaining Mr. Tressider at the time, and I should have been *de trop*, so I came away again!"

The crimson colour flooded her small face; the angry contempt, the reproach in his tone, were so evident.

"I—I thought I heard someone open the door," she faltered.

"I was the untimely intruder!" he went on, bitterly. "Being a firm believer in the grammatical old proverb that 'Two's company, three's none,' I soon relieved you of my presence, however!"

Most men who are worth anything possess a temper. Will Meredith was no exception to this rule, and his temper was at white heat as he stood there with compressed lips and knitted brow, towering in his superior height over the cause of so much disquietude, who regarded him intently.

"I think you are very ungenerous when Mr. Tressider is in question!" said Mavis, warmly.

"Indeed! A similar charge cannot be lodged against you!" he retorted, a spasm of pain crossing his face. "I had ventured to hope—but it is folly to allude to that now. I should only distress you needlessly, since I presume that you are engaged, or about to become so, to Mr. Tressider. I inferred as much from your attitude just now!"

"Then you arrived at a premature conclusion!" said Mavis, blushing furiously as she spoke. "Mr. Tressider asked me to become his wife, it is true, and I refused. At the same time I am very sorry to have given him pain. He is not full of envy, hatred, and malice like—like some other people I know!" The revulsion of feeling, the sudden inrush of joy and renewed hope, the result of her words, carried Will Meredith out of himself on a tidal wave of passionate relief and thankfulness. Claspings Mavis to his heart, he rained kisses upon her sweet, sensitive face.

"Will—Mr. Meredith—how dare you!" she gasped, tearing herself away from him, half-frightened, half-indignant at his vehemence.

"Mavis, darling!" he exclaimed, imploringly, imprisoning her hands in his strong ones, "you must know how dear you are to me—how essential; and the relief your words have brought with them. My poverty and not my will has kept me silent until now. A little while ago, when I thought you had accepted Mr. Tressider, the misconception well-nigh maddened me. Thank Heaven, you are still free! Mavis, must my want of fortune for ever stand between us? Dare I hope that you care even a little for me in return? Give me some encouragement, and I will work harder than ever to prove myself deserving of you! Was it for my sake that you refused Tressider?"

"Yes," murmured the girl, hiding her face upon his shoulder, as he drew her towards him. "I have never loved anyone but you, Will. How could you deem me capable of accepting Tressider?"

"Darling, forgive me, I will never doubt or misjudge you again!" he said fervently, straining her to his heart in passionate gladness. "It was my love that rendered me so madly jealous. And you will become my wife, Mavis, as soon as I am in a position to claim you?"

"Yes, providing papa's consent can be obtained, and I do not think he will withhold it."

"And my poverty?"

"Will never lessen my love for you. Riches are not everything, dear, and since I have never been accustomed to them I am the less likely to crave for them."

"Half-an-hour ago I deemed you false, mercenary, calculating!" he said, remorsefully.

"Mavis, my little queen, can you ever forgive me?"

"Yes, if the offence is not repeated," she whispered, with a smile. "Will, I am afraid we are selfishly happy. That poor Mr. Tressider—!"

"What of him?"

"Would you believe it?" she went on. "When I told him, as kindly as possible, that we could never be anything but friends, he actually broke down and cried. It was dreadful to see such a big fellow give way like that, and to regard myself as the cause."

"For real softness and vulnerability you must go to a big fellow," said Will, laughingly. "Little men think most of their own dignity. It is your giant who gets the hardest hit, who goes to the wall in affairs of this kind. Cheer up, darling; Tressider has not received a death-blow at your hands. He'll recover yet, and we shall reckon him among our friends."

Sydney Neville failed to display much gratification upon being requested to sanction the engagement entered into between Mavis and Will Meredith.

"Frankly speaking, Meredith," said the artist, "I should have preferred Luke Tressider as my prospective son-in-law, much as I like and esteem you individually. Like myself, unfortunately, you are poor; your prospects are uncertain, whereas Tressider could have provided handsomely for my little girl, and relieved me of much anxiety with regard to her future. Since she cares for you, however, I am not sufficiently Spartan to stand between you and forbid the banns. One condition I must insist on, though. You must be in receipt of at least three hundred a-year before you marry Mavis. On no other terms will I consent to your being engaged."

"I am quite willing to agree to the condition," was the reply. "Indeed, I am grateful to you, sir, for not rejecting my proposal altogether. I am well aware of my ineligibility as a suitor, Mavis has promised to wait until I can claim her, and, with such an incentive to spur me on I cannot fail to command the desired success."

Luke Tressider came no more to the West Kensington villa. He had, for a man of his type, taken his rejection very keenly to heart. Dogs and horses, pugilists and poker alike failed to console the disconsolate lover. He went abroad, and Mavis breathed more freely in consequence.

Gretchen, having scented out their engagement by some occult process, was forever regarding Will and Mavis with big, curious blue eyes, as if the new relation in which they stood to each other had rendered them objects of keen interest to her.

The baby face beneath the mob cap was constantly wreathed in smiles, for Gretchen had recently obtained a lover herself, a big guardsman, and she seemed to think this fact established a kind of freemasonry between her and the upstairs lovers.

"I think Gretchen must be going off her head," said Mavis, laughingly, one morning. "She forgot to make any toast for breakfast, and she sent the eggs up *unboiled* yesterday."

A terrific crash in the lower regions, and the sound of Mam'selle's voice approaching *crescendo*, sent Mavis flying off to ascertain what damage had been done.

"Another little row between France and Germany?" asked Will Meredith, lazily, upon her return. "Are the two countries engaged in deadly warfare?"

### CHAPTER III.

"GERMANY, otherwise Gretchen, has got a lover, you know," explained Mavis, with a

conscious blush, "a big guardsman, and the conquest seems to have turned her brain. She wants two evenings out instead of one. Auntie refuses to make this concession; and Germany, in revenge, contrives to let our best soup-tureen slip through her fingers and come to grief on the stone floor. It is dreadfully tiresome."

"And the state of affairs at the present moment between the belligerents?" inquired Will Meredith.

"Oh! Germany has retired to the kitchen to sulk, while France has gone to her bedroom to shed tears over the broken soup-tureen. Poor auntie, she is so cross with that 'small leetle girl,' as she calls Gretchen, yet, with all her faults, we should be sorry to lose Germany. What have you got there, Will, a ring?"

"Yes," he replied, drawing her closer to him, and placing the ring in her hand for inspection. "It is about the only article of value that I possess, always excepting yourself. It belonged to my father originally. Indeed, it has been in our family for many generations. It is a family heirloom."

"It is lovely!" exclaimed Mavis, slipping it on her slim white finger, for which it was much too large.

The ring consisted of a magnificent sapphire, engraved with the Merediths' crest, and surrounded with diamonds of the first water, that flashed and scintillated in the sunlight.

"It must be worth a great deal of money, Will?"

"Someone offered me a hundred guineas for it not long ago," he rejoined; "but I refused to sell my heirloom. We Merediths were once people of some importance in our own county, and only the pinch of extreme poverty would induce me to part with this, the one remaining relic of more prosperous times!"

"What are you young people examining, pray—a ring?" asked Sydney Neville, entering the room, his large, genial individuality seeming to fill it with sudden life and action. "That looks suspicious. It is only an engagement ring, I presume? Otherwise, you will have the indignant parent, myself, swooping down upon you both for perjury!"

"It is not even that, sir!" said Will Meredith, passing the ring to him with a smile. "Mavis would be puzzled to keep it on her finger. This is an heirloom!"

"And a very valuable one!" rejoined Sydney Neville, holding the ring up, and examining it with the eye of a connoisseur. "That sapphire is absolutely flawless! and the setting is superb! Do you wear this ring as a rule? I have never observed it upon your finger."

"No; I keep it locked up in my dressing-case," said the young man. "Such a ring would hardly match with my present fortunes; and then there would be the danger of losing it, since I am naturally careless and somewhat absent-minded as well."

"A wise precaution," remarked the artist, returning the jewel to its owner. "So long as you retain that ring, you will always have realisable property in case of need. Are you coming to the club with me for an hour to give me my revenge at billiards? He beat me hollow yesterday, Mavis. Nice conduct that on the part of my prospective son-in-law!"

Towards the end of July, when London became unbearably hot and oppressive, Sydney Neville proposed a trip to the seaside, since their means that year would not admit of their going further afield.

His pictures had sold badly, and at reduced prices, much to his disappointment and annoyance.

Will Meredith gladly seconded the motion. To wander with Mavis by the seashore late and early, to lie recumbent upon the warm sand while she read Tennyson to him in her soft, musical voice; to row her over the smooth, blue waters of a summer sea, would be delightful, indeed, coming after a spell of hard work.

St. Leonards was decided upon in family conclave, and Mam'selle began to pack ready for departure, or, rather, to turn everything



happy-turvy, for Mavis did the actual packing.

"We must have some fresh toilettes for the promenade and for church on Sunday," she declared, extracting a cheque from Sydney Neville for the purpose.

The artist grumbled audibly as he filled it in.

"I believe a Frenchwoman's first thought upon entering Paradise would be to ascertain what the angels had got on!" he remarked, sarcastically, to Will Meredith; "and whether they were *en grand toilette* or not! Dress, with her, is the primary consideration."

Yet he, too, shared in the pleasant stir of approaching departure, or appeared to do so. And when they assembled at luncheon on the day previous to that appointed for their journey, the artist had never seemed in more genial mood.

"What has become of Mr. Neville?" asked Will Meredith, a few hours later, when Mam'selle entered the studio with two cups of tea. "I have seen nothing of him since luncheon. He is playing the truant."

The Frenchwoman nearly dropped the little tray she was holding as he spoke. Then, setting it down, she made some incoherent reply, glanced round the studio and hurried away, evidently in quest of her brother-in-law.

Having packed what sketching materials he required to take with him, Will Meredith went to the drawing-room to ascertain if Sydney Neville was there.

He found it empty. As he turned to quit it Mavis entered and came up to him.

Her face was deathly pale; the look of vague terror and disquietude he had seen once before in her eyes had returned to them. The little hands he clasped in his were cold and trembling.

"I am so sorry," she began, with a spasmodic smile; "but we cannot start to-morrow as arranged. Papa has—has been obliged to go away again suddenly, and I should not like to leave home until he returns. You won't be angry, Will?"

"Angry!" he repeated. "Certainly not; least of all with you, Mavis. At the same time, it is odd that your father made no allusion to his intended journey at luncheon. Surely he must have been aware of it then?"

"Perhaps, I cannot say," she replied. "He would not be guilty of any intentional discourtesy towards you. I am certain of that."

"How long will he be absent?"

"In all probability three days—or even longer. If you would like to start without us—"

"I shall do nothing of the kind," he interposed, promptly. "Without you, Mavis, the projected holiday would lose all its charm for me. Are you at liberty to disclose the purport of these mysterious journeys undertaken by your father at such short notice from time to time? As your affianced husband, some confidence might be reposed in me."

"Papa has requested me not to divulge their nature at present to anyone," she replied, with quivering lips. "Perhaps some day they will cease—or he will explain them himself."

"Very well, I can wait," said Will Meredith, tenderly, passing his arm around her waist with a protecting air. "Only I regret these journeys on your account, Mavis, since the anxiety they cause you is so obvious."

The remainder of the day that had dawned so brightly passed slowly and heavily away. An atmosphere of gloom and depression, of strained, anxious waiting had settled down once more upon the household.

Mam'selle's eyes looked as if she had been crying bitterly. Will Meredith, surrounded on all sides by mystery, began to feel impatient. All sorts of speculations and surmises bearing upon the artist's strange conduct flitted through his brain.

"Where is Mavis?" he asked, entering the

drawing-room just as it was growing dusk the next day.

"Gone to bed with a bad headache," said Mam'selle, who sat there alone. "I was to bid you 'good-night' for her."

He noticed the tremor in her voice, and wondered at it. Feeling restless and uneasy, he strolled out presently to purchase some cigars. He had nearly reached the house on his way back when a sudden commotion, men shouting and swearing, women screaming, arose.

Another second, and a hansom dashed wildly round the corner of the suburban street, the horse going at a mad gallop. The driver—who still clung to his perch, had lost all control over the frightened animal, the rotten reins breaking as he tugged at them.

Passers-by scattered right and left to avoid the erratic career of the hansom. A policeman made a futile grab at the horse's head as it swept past him, and narrowly escaped being knocked down. The shouts of the pursuers only added to the creature's panic.

There were two persons, a man and a girl, in the hansom. The girl's shrill scream of affright reached Will Meredith's ears as, darting into the centre of the road, he awaited the horse's approach, and seized it by the bridle, his iron grip arresting its career, and causing it to recoil upon its haunches.

A crowd quickly collected. The driver of the hansom jumped down, and the fares also alighted, frightened, but unhurt.

As he glanced at them, Will Meredith recoiled in horrified astonishment.

The man was Luke Tressider! the girl clinging convulsively to his arm none other than Mavis Neville, his *fiancée*!

As they recognised each other, Will Meredith regarded her incredulously, reluctant to accept the evidence of his own senses, since it must needs tell so terribly against her, while ruining his happiness.

"Mavis!" he exclaimed hoarsely, "you here, and with Tressider?"

"Take me home," she murmured, an agony of appeal in her dark blue eyes. "I—I am ill. I have had such a terrible fright. Was it you who stopped the horse just now?"

"Yes," he replied, briefly and sternly, turning away from her towards Tressider, who was settling matters with the driver of the hansom.

Mavis, his little love, upon whose fidelity and unerring sense of womanly honour he would have staked his life half-an-hour ago! Mavis, supposed to have retired early to her room with a bad headache, driving about town in a hansom with Luke Tressider as her companion! What shameful deceit had been practised upon him?

Will Meredith's head swam as he stood there confronting them both in grim silence.

"You nearly broke our necks!" said the Cornishman, irascibly to caddy. "And then you expect me to pay for the damage done, confound you!"

"It warn't my fault, sir, that the 'orse bolted," rejoined the man, deprecatingly. "That blooming triocycle with the coloured lamps started him off. I'd like to see them all smashed, I would! It's hard on a cove to have his reins broke, and his cab strained all to pieces, while—"

"There's a sovereign for you," interposed Tressider. "The lady and I will walk the rest of the way. We have had enough of your cab for one night."

Pushing his way through the crowd that had collected round the hansom Luke Tressider nodded awkwardly in recognition of Will Meredith, and offered his arm to Mavis.

She glanced imploringly at her lover, but he refused to meet her eyes or to constitute himself her escort, and the trio started for home in a most embarrassing silence—the silence that comes before a storm.

Both Luke Tressider and Mavis Neville were obviously disconcerted by Will Meredith's inopportune appearance.

The big, fair, ruddy Cornishman seemed utterly at a loss for words as they went along.

He was in faultless evening attire, a diamond solitaire gleaming in his snowy shirt-front, unconcealed by the light unbuttoned overcoat he wore.

"It's just the very deuce!" he muttered to his companion. "I wouldn't have had it happen for fifty pounds!"

Mavis made no rejoinder. Her face, white and rigid in its tearless misery, looked straight ahead.

She had on a light summer dust-cloak, and her gossamer veil was raised. She felt as if she were on the verge of a fainting fit.

"By Jove! that was a plucky thing you did just now, Meredith, in stopping that brute of a horse!" said Tressider, assuming an ease of manner that he was far from feeling.

"You think so?" was the terse reply.

"Undoubtedly I do. Miss Neville and I have cause to feel extremely grateful to you for coming to our rescue."

This was a cram. The pair would far sooner have taken their chance of being shot out, or introduced to a lamp-post, than have owed their rescue to the very man of all others they most wished to avoid meeting.

"I—er—happened to come across Miss Neville on her return from visiting some friends at—at Baywater. She had lost her way, and I was conveying her home when that—in-furiated animal bolted with us. I daresay, now, you thought it funny?"

His tone, at once conciliatory and savage, would, at any other time, have been ludicrous. That he detested Will Meredith was palpable, yet, for some reason, he sought to explain away any ill impression, the result of the *contretemps*.

Will Meredith's lip curled scornfully as he listened to this feeble explanation evolved from a not too fertile brain on the spur of the moment.

"Yes, I did think it funny," he replied, in a choked kind of voice, as they reached the Queen Anne villa, to be admitted by Gretchen, whose blue eyes opened to their widest extent at beholding them.

"Ah, Ciel, but what is this!" exclaimed Mam'selle, wildly starting to her feet as the two men, accompanied by Mavis, entered the drawing-room. "What has happened?"

"Mr. Tressider was escorting me home in a hansom when the horse bolted, and Will, who happened to be passing, stopped it," said Mavis, speaking swiftly, as if to prevent Mam'selle, in her alarm, from making any disclosures.

"My poor child! Are you hurt?"

"No," with a faint smile, "only frightened. I am going upstairs to take off my things."

"Stop!" cried Will Meredith, placing a firm, detaining hand upon her arm. "Before you go, Mavis, you owe me an explanation. The one vouchsafed by Mr. Tressider I regard as an amiable fiction. An hour ago I was informed by your aunt that you had gone to your room for the night. I went out, to discover you riding in a hansom, accompanied by Mr. Tressider. As your affianced husband, I demand an explanation of such conduct on your part!"

"I cannot say more than you have already heard," she replied, nervously. "I was really in doubt as to which way I had better take, and Mr. Tressider kindly volunteered to see me safe home."

Will Meredith's brown eyes flashed sudden fire.

"Are you all in league to deceive me?" he cried, fiercely. "If you will not admit the truth, Tressider shall!"

"I am willing to admit just as much as Miss Neville desires, and no more!" retorted Tressider, with equal heat. "She is in no wise compromised by what has occurred. If you can doubt her, and harbour suspicious unworthy of a gentleman, you don't deserve to stand to her in your present relation!"

The two men faced each other defiantly, their passions thoroughly aroused.

"You are a cad, sir, to shelter yourself behind a promise given to a lady, to make it your excuse for remaining silent, and by so doing imperilling her reputation," cried Will Meredith, "a miserable cad!"

Ere the Cornishman could reply, Mavis had stepped between them.

"Don't, pray! don't resent what has just been said," she murmured, in tones of passionate entreaty. "If you have any consideration for me, go—go at once. I implore you to do so, without attempting to justify yourself or me. Your presence here, after what has occurred, can only be productive of harm."

"Since you request me to do so I will go," replied Luke Tressider, "leaving you to the tender mercies of this gentleman, in whose person all good breeding and manly qualities would appear to be centred. I can only say that he is a bigger fool than I took him to be if he fancied his threats could induce me to act in defiance of your expressed wishes. Consideration for you, Miss Neville, alone causes me to refrain from any immediate reprisal with regard to the insult I have received."

He went, leaving Mam'selle sobbing bitterly in the depths of an easy chair. Ere Will Meredith could detain her Mavis had flown upstairs, to return, in a few moments, weary, white-faced, the look of some hunted creature in her great dark blue eyes, yet, wishful, firm and self-collected.

"Mavis," cried the young artist, imploringly, "would you drive me mad? Would you have me deem you capable of conduct unworthy of my affianced wife—of falsehood and deceit? If not, you will at once remove the jealous doubts to which you have given rise, and explain your conduct of to-night!"

He bent over her imperiously as he spoke, his eyes reading her drooping face with pitiless scrutiny.

"Will!" the faint, sweet, beseeching voice rose in a wail of pain and entreaty, "can you not trust me blindly for once? Indeed, I have not averred in my allegiance to you—I am not, as you say, false."

"Then prove it!" he said, sternly, his voice choked with passion. "What have you in common with Tressider, you, my fiancée, that should justify you in going out to meet him by stealth? Your silence establishes your guilt. You have come to regard the dismissal of your wealthy lover as a foolish act, I suppose. It is the old story. With gold in one scale, love in the other, love may be expected to kick the beam."

Lower and lower drooped the pretty dark head beneath the weight of his bitter words till it rested upon the little trembling hands.

Her silence, instead of arousing his pity, only added fuel to the fire of his wrath. Had she been able to refute his accusations would she not at once have done so? She had played him false, and he, poor fool, had deemed her incapable of deceit.

#### CHAPTER IV.

"I HAVE done no wrong!" Mavis repeated, with quivering lips and tear-filled eyes, "yet I am not at liberty to reveal the exact nature of the urgent business that necessitated a meeting with Luke Tressider, my old lover. Is it my fault that he once asked me to be his wife? His love reflects no discredit upon me, and it had nothing whatever to do with our assignation to-night!"

"And you expect me to believe this?" cried Will Meredith, sternly, "to rest content with such a vague explanation. Take your choice, Mavis. Either tell me all, and leave me to judge whether you have acted imprudently, or renounce the idea of becoming my wife. The latter alternative is, perhaps, what you most desire. In that case you should have asked me openly to restore your freedom, and I would not have refused."

"Oh, Will!" she moaned, falling on her

knees at his feet, "be merciful! I have suffered so much to-day. I can bear no more!"

He raised her gently, a cruel pain at his heart the while.

"Mavis, Mavis! only comply with my request!" he said, a sob of agony in his voice that revealed to her the depth of his suffering. "You shall not find me harsh or unforgiving if you will but confide in me, and thus prove that your love is still in my keeping."

"We must part, then," she replied, slowly. "I cannot fulfil the condition upon which you insist."

"If we part," he reminded her, bitterly, "it will be for ever! I shall leave this house at once. Mavis, will nothing move you to speak?"

"I cannot," she said, the words coming brokenly from between her dry lips. "Do not press me any further. It is worse than useless."

"Then you have ceased to love me?"

His handsome, haggard young face was close to hers, the dark eyes beneath the level brows sought hers, as if striving to read there the secret she would not reveal.

"You must be content to trust me blindly," she said, wearily, "or let me go, as you say, for ever. My lips are sealed with regard to the transaction that took me from home to-night."

"Then our engagement is at an end," rejoined Will Meredith, coldly. "Should Mr. Neville, when he returns, desire to know my reasons for thus abruptly terminating it, I shall be quite willing to state them, unless, in deference to your wishes, I remain silent upon the subject."

A smile, the saddest he had ever seen, wreathed her lips as he spoke.

"You may leave me to explain matters to my father," she said, quietly. "No blame shall be ascribed to you—and now good-bye."

"Good-bye. May Heaven forgive you the misery you have caused me to suffer!" he said, briefly and sternly, as he turned to go.

"Mavis, my child, it must not, it shall not be! I cannot permit you to sacrifice yourself to such an extent. Mr. Meredith, I command you to stop!"

The protest came from Mam'selle, overlooked, forgotten, by Will and Mavis in their excited discussion. As the Frenchwoman came forward, her brown eyes full of unshed tears, fateful words trembling upon her lips, Mavis interposed to check the threatened disclosure.

"Hush, auntie!" she said, throwing her arms around Mam'selle's plump little waist, a certain proud, serene, girlish dignity replacing her previous humble entreating attitude. "You forget yourself, dear. Anything you said now could only alter matters for the worse—not for the better—and I should never forgive you for interfering, for trying to reconcile Mr. Meredith to me. He has arrived at his decision, and I have no wish to alter it. Nothing less than a perfect faith could satisfy him—or me."

Overpowered by the superior force of her niece's will Mam'selle remained silent, and in silence Will Meredith bowed to the two ladies, and quitted the room where he had spent so many happy hours, his faith in the girl he still loved so well blown to the winds, his happiness hopelessly wrecked!

Going upstairs to his own room, he commenced packing in readiness for departure. The sooner he quitted that now hateful house the better for all concerned.

Crossing the room with a handful of things to be stuffed anyhow into his portmanteau, he espied some small article lying upon the carpet.

He picked it up and carried it to the light.

It was only a woman's mauve silk glove, to which a faint delicate odour of perfume still clung.

He recognised it instantly as one of the gloves Mavis had worn that very night when he came across her in the hansom with Luke Tressider.

By what agency had the glove been transferred to his room since then? Who had dropped it there? It was most improbable that Mavis had herself entered his room for any purpose since her return; yet how else could the presence of the glove be accounted for?

The very atmosphere of the house seemed full of mystery.

Will Meredith looked this unexpected find in his desk after pressing the glove to his lips.

The next day he quitted Belmont Villa without encountering Mavis again. As the front door closed behind him it seemed to shut him out not merely from the house, but from hope and love, and all that rendered life pleasant and desirable as well.

The Royal Academy on the day after the private view.

A well-dressed, fashionable throng was streaming up the wide, shallow staircase of Burlington House after a general rendering up of sticks and umbrellas below, to enter the magnificent rooms hung from floor to ceiling with the productions of modern painters.

A year had elapsed since Will Meredith quitted Belmont Villa in such fierce anger against the girl he loved—the girl he had not once come in contact with since that bitter parting.

The artist looked full three years older as he insinuated his way through the fashionable throng, still in suspense with regard to the fate of his own work.

Since he had failed to receive a "varnish-ing" ticket he feared the worst.

His heart beat rapidly as he went from room to room, scanning the walls in search of the picture upon which so many ambitious hopes had been centred.

He was not alone. Leaning upon his arm was a superbly-dressed woman of three-and-thirty, a woman with large, brilliant dark eyes, aquiline features, and glossy, dark hair wound in thick coils round her finely-moulded head.

Her figure, perfect in its full-flowing curves, was displayed to advantage by the rich dress of olive-green and shrimp-pink that she wore, with a ravishing little bonnet to match.

Her ripe, queenly beauty of form and feature caused many glances—some admiring, some envious—to be directed towards her.

"Don't despair," she said, encouragingly to her companion in low, firm, musical tones. "There are yet two rooms unvisited. Your work may be in one of them."

"I fear not," he rejoined, bitterly. "I am fated to be unsuccessful, it seems, and Jupiter himself had to submit to fate. He could not struggle against it, neither can I."

"Nonsense!" retorted Beatrice Millward, as her dark eyes alternately scanned the walls and the handsome, gloomy face of the young artist. "To a certain extent a man controls his own fortune, or what would become of free will?"

"At least fate has been kind in granting me your friendship and sympathy, Mrs. Millward," he replied, with an *empressment* that brought a faint tinge of colour to the clear olive of her cheeks.

As they entered the last room a group collected in front of a large picture hung on the line attracted their attention. Beatrice Millward went towards it.

"Look!" she exclaimed, her beautiful eyes shining with excitement, her wonted stately calm dispelled.

Will Meredith did look, his breath coming thick and fast, a whole chime of bells—joy-bells—ringing in his ears, to see his canvas well hung upon the line, creating an evident sensation.

The large, elaborately-framed picture represented May-day in the olden time.

A group of graceful village maidens and stalwart, handsome youths were dancing around the flower-wreathed Maypole. The



central figure, the May-queen, a slender girl with dewy violet eyes, fresh, pure, flower-like in her girlish loveliness, gowned in spotless white, bore a striking resemblance to Mavis Neville.

His success, so unlooked-for, treading upon the heels of repeated failures, well-nigh unmanned Will Meredith.

Owing to some mistake or neglect he had failed to receive a varnishing ticket. Otherwise his good fortune would have been revealed to him earlier in the day. He had worked hard, and his reward had come at last.

"No need to rail at fate, now," remarked Beatrice Millward, with a radiant smile, "when she has treated you so kindly. The picture will create a perfect *furore*. And I am the first to congratulate you on the success achieved."

He remained silent, gazing intently at his own work, around which new arrivals were constantly flocking, while words of favourable criticism and praise reached his ear where he stood. A great wave of bitterness, of hopeless sorrow and regret, had risen to drown the sudden gladness and elation.

"Oh, Mavis, my love! my darling! had you but remained faithful in your allegiance to me, what a triumph would this have been to-day!" was the reflection surging through his mind. "As it is, while conducing towards it, you have robbed my success of the joy that should have attended it. Without you life can never be the same to me again."

"Has the May queen suddenly descended from her frame, like the ancestors in Riddigore?" whispered Beatrice Millward. "That girl to the left, dressed in white, is her very counterpart!"

"Mavis!"

He uttered her name involuntarily.

She was standing not a yard from him—his lost love—her eyes fastened upon the picture. The sweet, mobile face, the deep, haunting eyes had lost none of their old fascination for him.

At that moment she turned, to behold him and his companion watching her.

With a glance of pained reproach that he never forgot, she disappeared in the crowd, ere Will Meredith could acknowledge her presence.

"Who is that young lady?" asked Beatrice Millward.

"A Miss Neville. She sat to me for the May-queen," was the abrupt response. "But we have seen little of each other since."

Beatrice Millward had plenty of tact. She felt certain that the girl with the lovely face had in some way played Will Meredith false, after winning his heart; and a jealous pang, a sense of anger against this rival, was the consequence.

Yet outwardly she remained placid, gracious, unaware of anything amiss calculated to mar his well-earned success, while making no further allusion to Mavis Neville.

When they quitted the Academy she carried the artist off to her pretty little house in Park-lane to luncheon.

He was a frequent visitor there, to the envy of men, his superiors in wealth and rank, who had yet failed to find their way into the charming widow's esteem and favour.

Will Meredith had been introduced to Mrs. Millward while his wounded love and pride, his sense of irreparable loss, were still unabated.

The society of the beautiful widow, the sympathy and congenial friendship she accorded him, were very soothing to the young man.

He could never love again; yet his heart craved for affection, interest, friendship—something to fill the void created in it by Mavis Neville, and Beatrice Millward gave him precisely what he most wanted in this respect.

Only once had Meredith encountered Sydney Neville since leaving Belmont Villa. On that occasion the artist had positively declined to

enter into conversation respecting the event that had led to the breaking off of the engagement. He seemed ill at ease, and anxious to shun the subject.

"You were not to be censured for acting as you did, Meredith," he said, hurriedly, "since an explanation was withheld. At the same time, Mavis, poor child, had done nothing amiss. It was an unfortunate affair. Since she and you are hopelessly parted, we need not allude to it again!"

"But if she has satisfied you—"

"Oh, for Heaven's sake, let us drop the subject!" exclaimed Neville, irritably. "She has extracted a promise from me never to reveal to you the circumstances of that night, and I cannot break it. My child is innocent of wrong in thought, word, or deed, and that is all I can say!"

Three weeks later Meredith was at work in his studio when a brother artist sauntered in.

"Heard the news?" he inquired, languidly, as he lighted one of Will's cigars, and threw himself into an easy-chair.

"What news?"

"That little girl of Neville's is going to marry a howling swell. The luck some people get is disgusting. That lazy beggar, Neville, will be able to take it easier than ever, since he will have a rich son-in-law to draw upon. Drawing of that kind pays a sight better than painting!"

The brush dropped from Will Meredith's hand. It took him some time to find it.

"Did you hear the name of the man Miss Neville is about to marry?" he inquired.

"Yes; Tressider. He's a Cornishman, with a fine old place in Cornwall, and a pot of money," was the reply. "Can't imagine what induced him to propose to a shy little thing like Mavis Neville, a girl without any 'go' in her. Every man to his taste, but she wouldn't be mine!"

Will Meredith repressed a desire to kick the free-spoken young gentleman, and bore with him until he quitted the studio, leaving Meredith to the full bitterness of his own reflections.

Mavis about to marry Tressider after all, to sell herself for gold. This news tended to confirm all his previous suspicions, to sweep away even the faint doubt in her favour until then lingering in his mind.

"False, doubly false, mercenary, heartless!" he exclaimed, fiercely, as he threw aside his brush. "Why should I regret her? Why allow the fact of her approaching marriage to affect me so keenly? I am well rid of such a woman. And yet, not even the knowledge of her worthlessness can kill my love for her!"

It seemed so difficult to reconcile such calculating worldliness and deceit with the frank sincerity, the tender trustfulness of old, and the passionate distress she had evinced at their parting.

She would have made a clever actress, he told himself, grimly. He painted no more that day. Dressing himself, he went out later on to visit Beatrice Millward.

He was always certain of a welcome there. The beautiful widow chanced to be alone in the drawing-room when he was announced. Artistic and harmonious as all her surroundings were, they served to enhance the dark rich-tinted mature loveliness of the woman whom society acknowledged as one of its queens.

"Is anything the matter?" she asked presently, glancing at his troubled face. "You look ill, haggard. You are working too hard. You need rest."

By degrees her interest in Will Meredith had deepened. If he cared for her sufficiently, why should they not come together, and let the world talk and wonder till it was tired? Her woman's heart yearned for the sympathy, the close, congenial companionship hitherto denied it.

Married at seventeen to an old man by her family, for the sake of his wealth, Beatrice Millward had known much of love's bitterness, little of its joy. The young officer who

had won her heart had been ordered abroad with his regiment, after treachery and deceit had been resorted to in order to estrange the lovers. Tidings of his death from yellow fever had reached her soon after her marriage, and rendered her life yet more desolate. Now a kind of Indian summer seemed about to dawn for her with the advent of Will Meredith.

"I am not ill," he replied, in answer to her question, "only restless, unsettled. I think I shall go to Africa for a while and hunt big game. When I return—"

Something in her face induced him to pause. Hearts are caught in the rebound, and he was fiercely, recklessly miserable just then, in a mood to say or do anything calculated to afford him immediate relief.

"Would you regret my absence, Beatrice?" he asked abruptly, bending over her.

She raised her dark, liquid eyes to his, and he read his answer there.

"You have only to bid me remain, and I will do so," he went on, kneeling beside her.

"Do you know all that such a command would involve?" she asked playfully, yet tenderly. "If you seek to make me your wife—and I am willing to admit that you are the only man I would consent to marry—you must remember that I am several years older than you, while—"

"Beatrice, if you will accept me as your husband," he interposed, "I will endeavour to make you forget the greatness of the concession on your part. It is as if a queen had stepped down from her throne to wed a subject! I will strive to make you happy in return!"

"Only be good to me, Will," she murmured. "Only open your heart to receive me, and I shall be content!"

"There is one thing you ought to know," he went on. "It is all over now, but—"

"You cared a great deal for a girl—the girl who sat for the May-queen," she replied, fearlessly. "I read it in your face at the time! I am glad you have been so candid with me!"

"She jilted me," he resumed, "for a rich fellow. But for you I should have lost faith in women entirely. Beatrice, your love will yet prove my earthly salvation!"

"Let us agree to make the best of our lives together," she said, gently, as their lips met, and thus the compact was sealed.

## CHAPTER V.

"Who the deuce can that be stumbling upstairs at this time of night?" muttered Will Meredith, going to the door of his sitting-room, candle in hand, to inspect the late visitor.

His new lodgings were in the neighbourhood of Piccadilly. They consisted of a sitting-room, with a bedroom leading out of it, his studio being on another floor.

It was long past midnight, and he was about to undress, when the sound of heavy, uncertain footsteps brought him out on to the landing to reconnoitre.

There were no other lodgers on that floor, so the untimely visitor must needs be for him.

As the latter reached the landing with some difficulty, Will Meredith regarded him in all astonishment.

"Neville!" he exclaimed, upon recognising the artist.

"Yes, dear boy! I—I was passing, and I thought I would give you a call. I seen nothing of you lately, you know! You've cut us altogether."

"I couldn't imagine who it was at this hour!" said Meredith, leading the way into his sitting-room.

Once within the radius of the lamp-light, he regarded Sydney Neville intently, at a loss to understand the subtle change that had taken place in his manner and appearance.

The big, handsome artist had thrown himself into an easy-chair. His eyes were dull and vacant, his speech thick, his dress slightly disordered.

These symptoms, taken in conjunction with the late visit to a man whom he had recently

made a point of avoiding, and with whom he could have no topic of importance to discuss, seemed to indicate something very like temporary derangement.

"Can he have been drinking?" thought Will Meredith, yet the idea was improbable.

A more abstemious man than Sydney Neville, during the months Meredith had spent under his roof, could not apparently have existed.

"What will you take?" he inquired, producing sherry, cigars, brandy-and-soda, and biscuits from the sideboard.

"A little brandy—neat," was the reply, as Sydney Neville rambled on from one subject to another, talking fitfully and incoherently to the young man, who sat opposite, regarding him with perplexed, questioning eyes.

"You haven't inquired after Mavis, or made any allusion to her!" he said at length, in an aggrieved tone.

"I hope Miss Neville is well?" replied Meredith, coldly.

"Yes, she's perfectly well. She's to be married, you know, a month hence to Tressider's, Treasurer's—"

His head drooped forward. He was falling asleep.

"Come! wake up, Neville," cried Will Meredith, shaking him gently. "It's time you went home."

"We won't go home till morning—too far off—sleep on sofa—shouldn't like to frighten Mavis," was the disconnected reply.

"He is drunk!" reflected Meredith, regretfully, as he assisted Sydney Neville to the sofa, and threw a travelling rug over him. "Can he have contracted intemperate habits of late? He was never like this before, to my knowledge."

He went to bed presently, leaving the door of communication between the two rooms open, should anything transpire. Yet he slept but little that night.

The unpleasant consciousness that Mavis Neville's father was slumbering in the next room in a state of profound intoxication tended to keep him awake.

How ashamed and degraded Sydney Neville would feel upon recovering his senses in the morning; and Mavis, what humiliation it would entail upon her to learn how and where her father had passed the night.

After all he was her father, and for her sake—little consideration as she deserved at his hands—Meredith had done the best he could for him under the circumstances.

His engagement to Beatrice Millward was only a few weeks old. He did not regret having entered into it. Her liking for him, her delicately-expressed sympathy, had first drawn him towards the beautiful widow.

Lonely, wretched, cynical, how could he fail to feel deeply grateful in return for such a favour and preference evinced for him by one who had so often been wooed in vain, who had turned away from wealthy and titled suitors to bestow herself upon a penniless artist?

Coming, as it did, after a cruel disillusion, her affection assumed a higher value in his sight.

If it failed to console him entirely for what he had suffered and lost it was still a rare gift, for which he must needs make some adequate return to the giver.

Yet the calm, passionate, tranquil affection he entertained for Beatrice Millward would not have borne comparison with the great, tumultuous love, the springtide of fervid devotion, that had moved his whole being towards Mavis Neville, thrilling it through and through with passionate, intense delight, and hopes yet to be realised in the rosiest future.

He fell asleep towards morning. Waking with a start as the clock struck seven, he jumped out of bed, and throwing on his dressing-gown, entered the sitting-room, to ascertain if Sydney Neville still slept.

To his amazement he found it untenanted. The sofa was empty, the rug lay upon the floor; the bird had flown, possibly in search of the proverbial worm.

"Gone home quietly rather than face me, I suppose," thought Will Meredith, with a sense of relief. "He was hardly conscious of what he was doing when he turned in here last night, and the morning brought reflection with it. So much the better. It would have been an awkward situation for us both, and, had he stayed, I must have asked him to breakfast with me."

Returning to his room, Will Meredith dressed rapidly. He had nearly completed his toilette when, searching the dressing-table for some article, he uttered an ejaculation.

"By Jove!"

Watch, chain, studs, card-case, purse, each and all had vanished from their accustomed places.

In what direction was he to search for the thief?

A sudden horrible, overwhelming suspicion thrilled him from head to foot. He started nervously when his landlady knocked at the door.

"What is it, Mrs. Simpson?"

"Oh, if you please, sir, here's a policeman, who says he wants to see you at once," replied that lady in a state of trepidation, lest her lodger should have been amusing himself overnight by wrenching off knockers, extinguishing gas-lamps, or ringing bells, to account for his being thus wanted by the law.

"Tell him to come in!"

The policeman, a stalwart, young fellow, with a square-intelligent face, entered accordingly. Having first ascertained that Mrs. Simpson was not listening at the keyhole outside on the landing, Will Meredith confronted his visitor.

"Have you lost anything quite recently, sir?" asked the latter.

"Have you found anything likely to belong to me, constable?" was the cautious rejoinder. The man smiled.

"The Inspector would feel obliged, sir, if you would step round to the station at once," he said. "We've got a well-dressed individual there who was brought in early this morning. One of our men found him wandering about the streets in a muddled condition, unable to give an account of himself. On searching him several articles of jewellery were found upon him, likewise a card-case. The cards having your name and address on them, sir, the Inspector sent me round here to make inquiries."

"I'll come directly," said Will Meredith, and in less than ten minutes he was having an interview with the Inspector at the nearest police-station.

"This is the man," said the latter, as Sydney Neville, escorted by a policeman, was brought forward.

Will Meredith never forgot that dreadful moment, or the expression of agonised entreaty of speechless shame and despair on the artist's face as their eyes met. It would be hard to say which felt the keenest emotion.

Sydney Neville's faculties were perfectly clear now. He could realise his position, and all that it involved. As he stood there, wiping the damp from his brow, he seemed to have aged ten years in a single night.

"These articles were found in the prisoner's possession," said the inspector, producing Will Meredith's watch, studs, rings, purse and card case. "They bear your initials, sir. Were they stolen from you last night?"

"No," replied Will Meredith, without a moment's hesitation. They were mine, undoubtedly, but you are mistaken with regard to the manner in which this gentleman became possessed of them. They were not stolen. He won them from me last night at play."

The inspector glanced keenly from one man to the other, and drew his own conclusions.

"In that case, sir," he said, "we need not detain him any longer, since the articles produced are, as you allege, his property, having changed hands. Of course, we were not to know that. The only charge against this gentleman now is of wandering in the streets without being able to give any account of himself."

"He is well known to me," replied Will Meredith, Sydney Neville still remaining silent, "and I will be responsible for his good behaviour, and undertake to see him safe home. He was drinking heavily last night, and lost his way, I suppose. He's all right now. Just ask one of your men to call a cab. Now, Neville, are you ready?"

A transfer of coin, an apology addressed to Sydney Neville by the officer, of which he took not the least notice, and then the two men were driven rapidly away in the direction of West Kensington.

"Queer start that!" observed the inspector to one of his subordinates, "and Mr. Meredith has told a thundering lie. If that fellow had won the watch and the other things at play wouldn't he have said so, instead of sitting there all in a heap, with guilt written plainly on his face, refusing to utter a word? It's a family affair, I expect, with more likely than not a woman at the bottom of it."

Once inside the cab, Sydney Neville leaned forward, shaking off the torpor that had held him spell-bound, and thrust the articles which had been restored to him into Will Meredith's hands.

"I was mad when I took them!" he exclaimed, hoarsely, "quite mad! Do you credit my assertion?"

"Yes," was the reply. "Had you been in your senses you could not have done it. On that point I require no convincing."

Sydney Neville sank back in the cab, pale, panting for breath, the mere wreck of his former self.

"You are ill?" said Meredith, in alarm.

"I believe I am dying," he murmured. "Meredith, you have saved me from worse than death. Your generous falsehood has rescued me and mine from disgrace and dishonour. Was it for her sake that you displayed so much forbearance?"

"For her sake and yours also," was the reply. "The friendly feeling that once existed between us, Neville—the esteem in which I have held you—would have rendered me desirous under any circumstances of preserving your reputation intact."

Sydney Neville groaned.

"If you but knew all, you might even now regret the unprecedented generosity displayed towards one so unworthy of it," he said, slowly. "I have caused bitter suffering, and not to you alone through my besetting sin. And it is too late to remedy the wrong done now—too late!"

"To what do you allude?" asked Will Meredith swiftly.

But Sydney Neville, rapidly sinking into a comatose condition, was unable to reply.

When the cab stopped in front of the pretty Queen Anne villa Gretchen opened the front-door ere the cabman could ring.

Just behind her were the pale, anxious faces of Mavis Neville and Mam'selle.

"Mr. Meredith!" cried the latter, scanning his face with frightened, brown eyes. "Have you come to tell us any bad news? My brother-in-law—"

"Is in the cab," interposed the young man. "Mr. Neville came to my rooms late last night, and, since he seems somewhat unwell I have brought him home this morning."

"Oh papa! papa!" The words were uttered by Mavis, as, white and trembling, she flew down the garden-path towards the cab.

Will Meredith's unexpected appearance and the shameful fact of her father's weakness being revealed to him, seemed as if it would crush her with its weight.

She hardly glanced at her former lover as he assisted Sydney Neville into the house. An agony of sensitive shame prevented her eyes from meeting his.

"I think we had better get him upstairs to his room at once," said Meredith, addressing Mam'selle. "I am afraid he is even more ill than I imagined. I should advise you to send for a doctor."

While Gretchen flew off upon this errand,



Will Meredith and the two ladies endeavoured to restore the artist to something like consciousness.

His heavy, stertorous breathing as he lay upon the bed alone broke the oppressive silence.

"Don't go," he murmured, faintly, as Meredith was about to quit the room when the doctor arrived. "There is something I must tell you ere I die, and the end is not far off. Stay with me until then."

Sydney Neville was correct in his presentiment. Excessive drinking, combined with some severe mental shock recently sustained, had, the doctor stated, accelerated a long-standing disease of the heart. In all probability, the artist had but a few hours yet to live.

As the medicine administered imparted a little fictitious strength, his mental faculties rallied.

"Leave me for a little while alone with Meredith, my darling!" he said tenderly to the girl bending over him.

"Papa, have you forgotten your promise to remain silent respecting the past," she cried, imploringly; "to make no disclosure that will reflect upon yourself?"

Sydney Neville smiled sadly.

"Child, I cannot die without first removing the wrong impression that still exists in Meredith's mind with regard to your conduct," he said, earnestly. "Let me do you at least this tardy justice. Already he knows to what depths of degradation and infamy I can sink. But for his intervention I should have died in a prison cell, charged with stealing his property last night. Don't interrupt me, Meredith. She must learn the bitter truth, in order to realise how much we both owe you."

With bowed head Mavis crept from the room, after listening to that pitiful story.

"I thank you," was all she said, in passing Will Meredith, and the sorrow in her voice filled his heart with sudden pity.

"Come closer to me, dear boy!" whispered the dying man. "You remember the night on which you came across Mavis and Luke Tressider in a hansom?"

"I am not likely to forget it," was the stern, brief reply.

"She was not false to you as you imagined," he went on. "It was my besetting sin that led up to the situation she refused to explain, since, had she done so, I should have been degraded for ever in your sight. For years past, from time to time, I have yielded to fits of intemperance, absenting myself from home for several days at a stretch, causing Mavis cruel anxiety and distress. While under the influence of drink I became a kleptomaniac, stealing any article of value upon which I could lay my hands."

"On the occasion in question, Mavis, to her horror, discovered that I had taken your diamond ring, the one kept in your dressing-case, and the key of which had been left carelessly lying about. She made inquiries, ascertained where I had pledged it, and, in her despair, not having sufficient money to reclaim the ring, she appealed to Luke Tressider—who was aware of my strange tendency—to assist her, rather than permit you to learn what I had done."

"He, touched by her distress, good-naturedly complied, although she had rejected him in your favour. They had regained possession of the ring, and were on their way home, Tressider intending to alight at the corner of the street when the horse bolted, and brought them under your notice."

Will Meredith remained silent. The mystery of the silk glove found in his room was solved at last.

"You know the rest," Sydney Neville went on. "How she let you go from her, deeming her false, rather than reveal the dishonourable act of which I had been guilty. She contrived to replace the ring in your dressing-case, and you never knew of its brief absence. When, in my remorse, I sought to

lessen her sacrifice by self-accusation, she exacted a promise from me to remain silent."

"For a while I fought against the evil habit only to yield to it again, and, by a strange fatality, to bring it under your notice. Can you forgive me the harm and misery I have wrought?"

"I will try," said Meredith, his face white and rigid. "Yet your daughter is about to marry Tressider?"

"Not Luke Tressider," corrected the dying man. "He got over his disappointment, and married a pretty Scotch girl three months ago. Mavis has consented to marry a cousin of his, a wealthy man, many years older than herself, who has recently returned from abroad, in order to save me from ruin and beggary. But she does not love him, poor child. Her heart has been true to you, Meredith, all along, and I have well-nigh broken it."

Mavis, misjudged and wrongly condemned—Mavis, loving, suffering, loyal, while he had deemed her false, calculating, worldly—Mavis lost to him for ever through his own want of faith in her. A mist swam before Will Meredith's eyes, as he realised the truth, at once so sweet, and so inexorably sad.

"Oh, my love, my little love!" he cried aloud in his anguish. "If I could but undo the past! If I were but free to kneel at your feet and sue for pardon. Neville, your revelation has indeed come too late to save our happiness from being wrecked!"

## CHAPTER VI.

SYDNEY NEVILLE was dead and in his grave, yet the harm he had wrought by means of his terrible vice of intemperance lived on in the world. They could not inter that with him and read the burial service over it.

Mavis had been removed from her father's death-bed in a prostrate condition. Some gentle violence had been necessary in order to detach her hand from that lifeless one to which she clung so fondly. A severe illness followed the prolonged mental strain—the heart anguish—she had endured so patiently for the sake of that beloved father.

Will Meredith in his fierce, unavailing regret and bitter self-reproach—his consciousness of what might have been but for his unreasoning jealousy in the past—seemed to live through an age of suffering at this period. He called daily at the house to inquire after Mavis, until she was declared to be out of danger. He prowled round it at night, watching the light in the sick-room, tormented by vehement useless longings and passionate regrets.

Mam'selle, softened by her previous favourite's penitence and remorse, had relented towards him.

It was she who brought him the latest news from the invalid's room, and revealed to him, as they sat together, the extent of the girl's love and self-sacrifice, upon which her father had made such frequent demands during his lifetime.

Yet, although Mam'selle was kind and forgiving, she could hold out no hope to the young artist. He could not have accepted it, indeed, had she done so. A double barrier existed now between him and the girl he loved. Her recently contracted engagement, and his own, severed them hopelessly.

As he was leaving the villa one day he encountered Owen Tressider, Mavis' fiancé. Will Meredith could but admit the latter's superiority to his cousin Luke, both in appearance and intellect. Tall, erect, soldier-like in carriage, with a stern, bronzed, handsome face, dark, penetrating eyes, and dark hair, slightly sprinkled with grey, Owen Tressider, although verging upon forty, was still an attractive man, far more so, indeed, than many of his juniors.

And Mavis had pledged herself to marry him without love! Would the stern, grave, handsome soldier ever discover this fact? Will Meredith asked himself, anxiously; and,

if so, would he visit the discovery upon his young wife's head?

Even when she recovered, Mavis refused to grant her old lover an interview. It would but add to their mutual pain, she declared. If there was anything to forgive on her part, it had been forgiven long ago. Since the past was unalterable, since each had plighted a fresh troth, it would be useless—nay, wrong—for them to meet again; and no entreaties could induce her to swerve from this decision.

Not long after Sydney Neville's death Meredith met Luke Tressider in Piccadilly one day, looking more bluff and hearty, more aggressively prosperous than ever.

A vexed, embarrassed expression crossed the Cornishman's face as Will Meredith pulled him up.

"Tressider, I owe you an ample apology!" he said, quietly. "I insulted and misjudged you upon a certain occasion which you have not forgotten, and you displayed great forbearance at the time! An admission made by Sydney Neville previous to his death opened my eyes to the truth. I can only express my sincere regret for the attitude I adopted. It has cost me very dear!"

Luke Tressider's ruddy face cleared like the sun emerging from behind a cloud. He grasped the other's outstretched hand cordially.

"So he told you, did he? I'm glad of it," he exclaimed. "Neville was an awful beggar when out on the spree. That poor little girl of his was almost out of her mind when she came to me that night about the missing ring—you know. Of course I helped her to recover it, although I felt anything but friendly towards you at the time."

"It was a generous, self-effacing act on your part that I shall never forget," said Meredith. "I repaid it badly."

"Rubbish! We'll let bygones be bygones, old man. I hope you are going to marry Mavis Neville, since her father has made a clean breast of it? I'm married, don't you know, and out of the running, so I can afford to give you my good wishes. I should like to introduce you to my wife, if you will call upon us. No allusion to this little incident when she is present, though."

"Certainly not," rejoined Meredith, with a faint smile. "Neville's disclosure came too late, unfortunately, to set matters right between us. Mavis is engaged to be married to your cousin, Mr. Tressider. She will never be my wife."

Beatrice Millward went to Bournemouth in August, whither her fiancé was to follow her later on. They were to be married in November, and the idea of this marriage had become a perfect nightmare of late to Will Meredith.

The calm happiness, the mental rest he had once looked forward to sharing with Beatrice were lost sight of in fury regrets, since he knew that Mavis Neville had never faltered in her allegiance to him.

An overpowering desire to see her again ere he left town induced Meredith to call at Belmont Villa. But Mavis was not there. The caretaker informed him that Miss Neville and her aunt had gone to Bournemouth, for the benefit of the young lady's health.

Wondering a little at the odd coincidence that had taken Mavis Neville and Beatrice Millward both to the same watering-place, Will Meredith went himself to Bournemouth the next day.

An illuminated concert was held in the hotel grounds that evening.

Strolling about on the look out for the beautiful widow, who had promised to join him there, he came suddenly across a forlorn little figure seated alone in a secluded part of the spacious garden, away from the lights and the music—a little figure dressed in deep mourning.

"Mavis!"

"Will!"

In their mutual surprise each had used the

old familiar appellation. Two young hearts went out in swift yearning to meet each other.

"Have you forgiven me?" he cried, throwing himself down beside her, Beatrice Millward completely forgotten. "Mavis, it is cruel to hide yourself from me, to deny me an interview when I pleaded so hard for one! Oh, my darling! that I should have lost you through my mad folly!"

She glanced up at him; her dark blue eyes looking unnaturally large in the small, pale face, that had lost its faint rose-leaf bloom, her soft, dusky hair clinging like vine tendrils round the blue-veined temples and little ears.

"Hush!" she said, gently. "You were not so much to blame, after all. I know that appearances were against me. I forgave you long ago, Will; even before I heard of your kindly falsehood that saved my father from public exposure and disgrace. Do you think I can ever forget how much I owe you? But you should not have come here!"

"Mavis, my darling! is there no hope for us?—must we part?" he exclaimed, in his misery.

"We must!" she repeated, with a sob. "You know that I am engaged to Owen Tressider!"

"Yes?"

"But for his generosity," she went on, "we should long since have been homeless. Papa's pictures sold so badly for months previous to his death. Mr. Tressider paid his debts, and prevented us from being sold up by our creditors. When he asked me to marry him I consented—out of gratitude. It seemed to matter so little what I did since you were lost to me. And I cannot go back from my promise now that papa is dead. Besides"—the sweet lips quivering as if in pain—"you also are engaged."

"Yes," he replied, sternly. "I am, as you say, engaged to the woman whose friendship and sympathy came to me at a time when I was smarting beneath the impression that you had deceived and thrown me over in favour of a wealthy lover. I offered her what little you had left me to give. It was not much; but she accepted it, and we agreed to make the best of our lives."

"Then came your father's statement, maddening me with the knowledge of what might have been. Beatrice Millward is a noble woman; ere long she will have become my wife. That is all. And you and I may yet have some forty years of existence to drag through—apart."

"You cannot retrace your steps, neither can I," she murmured, with bowed head. "Fate has been too strong for us. Once we stood hand in hand, now our paths lie far apart. Love, dear love, it only remains for us to say good-bye!"

Her voice sounded faint and far-off. It seemed to reach him from the other side of the gulf that parted them.

"If you had only—" he began, then paused, as the sound of voices reached his ear from the other side of a thick clump of flowering shrubs.

"Have you been long in England, Owen?" asked a woman; and the rich mellow tones were those of Beatrice Millward.

"About six months," was the reply. "I little thought that fate would ever throw us together again, Bea. With its usual irony, the meeting has been effected too late to ensure our happiness—to atone for the bitter joyless past."

"They told me you had died abroad of yellow fever; soon after I consented to marry Rickward Millward," she rejoined, and "my heart seemed to die with you."

"I was down with the fever," explained the deep, resonant, masculine voice, "but I recovered. Another fellow in our regiment died. My name must have been sent home in mistake for his. Soon after that I inherited a large fortune upon the death of an uncle. I sold out, and have been wandering about Africa or the Continent ever since. Six months

ago I came home with a desire to settle down. I met that poor child, and asked her to marry me, not dreaming that death had, in the interim, set you free."

Sitting there, side by side, in the warm, fragrant darkness, Will Meredith felt Mavis tremble convulsively. He caught her hand in both his own, and held it firmly.

"It is Owen Tressider!" she whispered. "He came down here to-day to join us, and he has met—"

"An old flame apparently; none other than my fiancée, Beatrice Millward."

"Is it possible? Oh, Will, we ought not to sit here any longer listening to their conversation," she faltered.

"We didn't ask them to come within earshot," he replied, calmly, a wave of sudden delicious joy surging through his soul, and sweeping all before it. "Mavis, be quiet. I mean to listen to every word they utter."

"It is very cruel, very hard to bear," Beatrice Millward went on a moan of pain in her voice. "A joyless reunion after so long a parting."

"And this young fellow you are about to marry?" asked her companion.

"He is an artist, who transferred his affection to me after being rejected by the girl he loved. He was candid enough to make this admission, and I was so lonely, so tired of my purposeless existence, that I accepted him, believing you to be dead. Owen, what have we done that we should suffer a second parting?"

"But for these fresh ties, formed while under a mutual misconception, my meeting with you to-night in the grounds would have ushered in a new glad era for us both. It would more than have atoned for the past," exclaimed Owen Tressider, passionately. "Yet honour forbids their being broken. Beatrice, my queen, I have been faithful to your memory through long, sad years; only to lose you at last."

The music reached them from afar with a faint, wailing sound; the night breeze brought with it the scent of summer flowers. On the other side of that fragrant hedge of bloom two lovers bent forward, swayed by some sudden impulse; their lips met in a long, clinging, thankful kiss; then, noiselessly, they rose and stole away together in the moonlight.

"We are free, thank Heaven!" said Will Meredith, gratefully. "Our fetters have been broken, Mavis. It was a fortunate chance—if chance it may be called—that brought Beatrice Millward and Owen Tressider within earshot to-night—fortunate both for them and for us, darling!"

"I can hardly realise it as yet," she rejoined, clinging closely to him. "It seems so strange, so wonderful, too good to be true."

Then, as Mamie came up, full of astonishment, but a little angry at finding them together, Will Meredith made a confident of her, and won her over to their side.

The next morning he had an early interview with Owen Tressider. It lasted nearly two hours; there was so much to be revealed and explained. Ere they parted, the two men had become firm friends. Then, feeling young at heart once more, Tressider went off in search of Beatrice Millward, after a brief colloquy with Mavis.

"So I had stolen your lover from you!" said Beatrice Millward, when the two women met, kissing Mavis as she spoke. "How you must have hated me, child!"

"All unconsciously I avenged myself by appropriating yours, dear Mrs. Millward," was the blushing reply. "I am so glad, so very thankful that the mistake—if we may so term it—was discovered in time to prevent it from marring all our lives."

"In fact," observed Will Meredith, provokingly, later on, "the whole thing was made square, little woman, by forming ourselves into a Mutual Benefit and Transfer Company, Limited, and fancy that none of us will ever regret the exchange effected. I shall not, of course, I can't answer for you; women are

proverbially fickle. But you can't have Owen Tressider now, even if you want him; that is one comfort."

A double marriage took place on the return of the party to town, Gretchen and her tall guardsman witnessing the ceremony from the gallery of the church.

If sunshine, rich, pure, radiant, may be accepted as a favourable bridal omen, the newly-married couples had enough and to spare, glad earnest of the future in store for them both.

[THE END.]

## FACTS & FABLES

DOING light work—Cleaning the lamps.

THE old maid's favourite vegetable is to mate, O.

As a rule orchestra leaders are moral heroes. They all face the music.

WHEN the grocer retires from business he weighs less than he did before.

THE man with an order at the theatre is like a successful prediction—he has come to pass. TALK is cheap in this world, because the supply is so much larger than the demand.

HE: "I wonder what makes the flies so sticky to-day?" SHE: "I suppose it must be that new fly paper you bought."

THE facetious father of a pair of twin babies complained that although they filled the house with music he could not tell one heir from another.

A SOLEMN old scientist printed the fact that by bathing the feet in tepid water a man could double his circulation, and now all the editors of our daily journals are having tanks fitted to their heating apparatus.

INTERIOR DECORATORS.—Stranger (to bartender in "art gallery"): "I see you have fine interior decorations here, my friend." Bartender: "Best in the city, sir. There is a bottle of interior decoration that has been in the cellar for twenty years."

GENEROSITY OF A COMMON SORT.—There is a new baby over at Snagg's, and when the two-year old baby saw it he said: "I div ze new baby my crib." Tom was highly commended. Then someone asked him where he was going to sleep. "Wif ze new baby," he answered, coolly.

THAT WAS a neat compliment paid by a French ambassador in London to a peeress who had been talking to him for an hour. The lady said: "You must think I am very fond of the sound of my own voice." The Frenchman replied: "I knew you liked music."

MAMIE, having been helped to everything on the table, slid down from her chair with a sigh. "There now," said her mamma, "I suppose you have eaten so much that you feel uncomfortable." "I don't," said Mamie, quickly, with a toss of her little head. "I only just feel nice and smooth."

"WHAT do you mean, Charles, by staying so long? When you went out you said you could go over to the Browns in ten minutes at the outside, and here you have been gone over two hours." "I said I could go over there in ten minutes at the outside, and so I did. The two hours extra, you know, I spent inside."

THE MOLEHILLS AND MOUNTAINS OF LIFE.—Mrs. De Cash: "Oh, yes, my plan of managing a man is to let him have his own way in small things, and then he is more impressed when you oppose him in great things. It is simple enough, and very easy." Fair Young Bride: "But what do you call small things?" "Oh, smoking in the back library, sitting with his legs crossed, neglecting to properly adjust his necktie, and so on. There's no use fighting about such things. But when a man begins criticising milliners' bills, it is time for a woman to assert herself."



## SOCIETY.

THE Beauty Show at Spa has resulted in the first prize of £200 being awarded to Mlle. Soucarot, a handsome creole, from Guadeloupe, of French origin, aged 18; the second prize of £80 to Mlle. Rosa, from Ostend, aged 16; and the third of £40 to a charming Viennese, aged 23. Besides five minor money prizes, valuable rewards in jewellery were given, and diplomas. The age of the competitors at the show was fixed at from 16 to 35 years. The maximum of the points which the jury could award was twenty, namely, two each for face, complexion, hair, teeth, bust, figure, hands, feet, expression, and deportment.

AUTUMN parasols in Paris are of an enormous size. The most fashionable are of silk, with hand-painted garlands of hops on a ground of blue, sea-green and orange, bunches of grapes on cream or pink, and asters and chrysanthemums on various shades. The parasols are edged with a deep, full fringe.

THE cure of Princess Christian's eyesight is proving a rather more tedious affair than was anticipated, and she is to remain for six weeks under the treatment of the Wiesbaden oculist, though no operation will be needed, it is hoped. We regret to hear that the weakness of the eyes has caused Her Royal Highness a good deal of pain, as well as this tedious delay abroad. Her daughters remain on a visit at Darmstadt, and Prince Christian is also still in Germany.

THE Empress Frederick has enjoyed her visit to Kiel, and received a most affectionate welcome there from the Prince and Princess Henry. Their dutiful and amiable behaviour (very different to that of her eldest son, the Emperor) seemed to cheer their mother as nothing else has done since her terrible bereavement, and it was noticed that her face wore more of its old bright looks than have lightened its sadness for long past.

THE Duke and Duchess of Westminster have been leading a roving life of late. After a long stay at Reay Forest, Sutherland, they last week migrated to Eaton Hall. They were to go to Grosvenor House for a fortnight, at the expiration of which time a move will be made to Clifden, where a stay of a couple of months will precede a return to the family mansion in Grosvenor-street.

THERE is nothing in the wide, wide world equal to fox-hunting, according to the people of Melton Mowbray. Already there are signs of activity among the ruling spirits of the stables and kennels. Visitors are also turning up, the Countess of Wilton being the most noteworthy. Her ladyship is staying at Egerton Lodge. By way of stimulating the energies of the Nimrods, there is to be a grand testimonialising on the 1st November. Sir Bache Osmond will have his little matter presented to him at a complimentary dinner at the Corn Exchange, Market Harborough; and at the same time the opportunity will be taken of conferring upon William Grant, his late huntsman, "a mark of esteem," &c. Notwithstanding all this, there is an ominous growl all round about the scarcity of old foxes, for cub-hunting does not satisfy your neck-or-nothing sportsman.

THE Countess Batthyany's death is much regretted in Hungarian Society. Though seventy-two years of age, she kept her faculties to the last, and was greatly beloved by a large circle of friends. It will be remembered how ingeniously she saved her husband from the ignominy of a felon's death; the Count was sentenced to be hanged, and his wife managed to convey secretly to his prison a dagger, so that he wounded himself in the throat, and had to be shot instead of hanged. Batthyany was the Hungarian Premier in 1841; and the Countess warmly shared her husband's patriotic views.

## STATISTICS.

THE United States Commissioners of Education report 12 000 000 children attending the public schools, of whom nearly 8,000,000 were in average daily attendance. The Southern States have made greater progress than other parts of the country.

THE Bible has had a wonderful circulation. A dozen editions were issued in Germany a half century before the Reformation, which brought it into prominence. Now probably there are 10 000 or more editions in existence, and a late duke succeeded in collecting about 2 000 copies in almost every language under Heaven.

THE quantity of fuel consumed by a locomotive depends upon the quality, amount of work done, speed and character of the road. On luggage trains an average consumption may be taken at about one to one and one-half pounds of coal consumed per truck per mile. With passenger trains, the carriages of which are heavier and the speed higher, the coal consumption is greater. A luggage train of thirty trucks at a speed of thirty miles an hour would therefore burn from 900 to 1,350 pounds of coal per hour.

## GEMS.

EXPERIENCE does take dreadfully high school wages, but he teaches like no other.

COMPLIMENTS of congratulation are always kindly taken, and cost one nothing but pens, ink, and paper.

THE first ingredient in conversation is truth, the next good sense, the third good humour, and the fourth wit.

IT is better to sow a good heart with kindness than a field with corn, for the heart's harvest is perpetual.

AS we grow in years and experience we become more tolerant, for it is rare to see a fault we have not ourselves committed.

WEDDINGS often leave old familiar hearts and places are haunted and empty as funerals. They are the funerals of old associations.

YOUTH is ever confiding; and we can almost forgive its disinclination to follow the counsels of age for the sake of the generous disdain with which it rejects suspicion.

TIME should not be allowed to pass without yielding fruits in the form of something learned worthy of being known, some good principle cultivated, or some good habit strengthened.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

FAT RASCALS.—One pound of flour, one-quarter pound of butter, one-quarter pound of currants, one ounce of moist sugar, half or a teaspoonful of salt; mix; then roll out the paste about an inch thick, dust powdered sugar over it, cut into rounds; bake in a quick oven.

GROUND RICE PUDDING.—Mix two ounces of ground rice in half-a-pint of cold milk; pour on it half-a-pint of boiling milk, in which six lumps of sugar have been dissolved, and stir over the fire for ten minutes. Put in the pudding an egg well beaten, and bake in a buttered tart dish for three-quarters of an hour.

SHAPE OF RICE.—Bake a quarter of a pound of rice, as directed for plain rice-pudding, taking care to have it dry. Remove the brown skin, and mix with the rice the yolks of two eggs, two ounces of powdered lump sugar, and a little almond or vanilla flavouring. Beat all together, but do not boil after adding the eggs. Press the rice into a mould; let it stand for some hours until set, then turn it out on a glass dish.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

If you should tell all you know, the recital might not require any great length of time; but if you attempt to tell all you do not know, one lifetime would not suffice.

WE think that a person may as well be asleep, for they can be only said to dream who read anything but with a view of improving their morals or regulating their conduct.

IT is only through the morning gate of the beautiful that you can penetrate into the realm of knowledge; that which we feel here as beauty, we shall one day know as truth.

IF we work upon marble it will perish; if we work upon brass, time will efface it; if we rear temples, they will crumble into dust; but if we work upon immortal minds, if we imbue them with principles, with the just-fear of God and love of our fellow-men, we engrave on those tablets something that will brighten to all eternity.

ARE you surprised to find how independent of money peace of conscience is, and how much happiness can be condensed in the humblest home? A cottage will not hold the bulky furniture and sumptuous accommodations of a mansion; but if God be there, a cottage would hold as much happiness as might stock a palace.

A THREEPENNY trip round the world, extending over 103 days, has just been accomplished by a postcard. Two cards were despatched from London, one westward on the 6th June last, the other eastwards two days later. The latter occupied seventy days on its journey, and cost 3d., while the former took 103 days, and cost 3d.

FOUR POINTS.—There were four good habits which a wise and good man earnestly recommended in his counsels and by his own examples, and which he considered essentially necessary for the happy management of temporal concerns. These are punctuality, accuracy, steadiness, and despatch. Without the first, time is wasted; without the second, mistakes the most hurtful to our own credit and interest, and that of others, may be committed; without the third, nothing can be well done; and, without the fourth, opportunities of advantage are lost which it is impossible to recall.

THE CAMPHOR-TREE.—Why do we continue to depend on certain parts of the world for our supply of what have become necessities? Some of them are vegetable products that with due care ought to be naturalized on some part of our continent, in which there is every variety of soil and climate. Why cannot the camphor-tree be grown? The tree is of the laurel family, and grows in China, Japan and several of the East India countries. It is a tree of considerable size, straight, towering, elegant. The leaves are oval, inclining to the lancehead shape, as they are pointed at each end. They are glossy and leathery, smelling of camphor strongly when rubbed in the hand. The blossoms of the tree are very small; the fruit is a berry about the size of a pea, of a deep purple colour when ripe. The camphor does not exude from the tree, even when the bark is cut, but is found in little bunches in the pores of the wood. To obtain it, the trunk, branches, and even the roots are cut into small bits and distilled. The camphor, volatilized by the heat, deposits on the cover of the vessel as it cools, and to remove it easily the inside of the cover is lined with a matting of rice straw. The crude camphor is exported, and in Europe and this country prepared for the market in the form under which we know it. The preparation of camphor originated with the Venetians, and was jealously guarded, but the Dutch in time obtained the secret, and succeeded to an almost complete monopoly of the trade. The wood of the tree is used for trunks and boxes, in which to preserve valuable vestments and garments, as the powerful odour repels most insects.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

T. H.—We regret we cannot accept the poem.

E. S. G.—Yes, unless with your parents' permission.

NANCY is a decided brunette, and writes a good but careless hand.

V. V.—The inscription, "Compliments of Mr. A. to Miss B." would be correct, under the circumstances.

JARPER—"The world loves a spice of wickedness" occurs in Longfellow's "Hyperion," Book I, chapter 7.

W. L.—There are plenty of periodical publications entirely devoted to the subject, to which we must beg to refer you.

IDA.—The picture is that of a round-faced, smiling, kindhearted and thoughtful young lady, so far as we can judge.

SYLVIA.—The young lady should undoubtedly speak first, or the gentleman may think she does not wish to recognize him.

MAMIE.—Letters addressed to the managers of theatres will receive attention. The address of the party named is not known to us.

A. B.—No doubt the firm in question will furnish any of the patterns on receipt of the price mentioned in the catalogue.

R. A.—A simple remedy for an ordinary cold in the head is the inhaling of hartshorn. Spirits of camphor may also be used for the same purpose.

C. L.—Coarse, red hands may be made white and soft by wearing old kid gloves every night, first rubbing the hands over with cold cream or glycerine.

T. T.—Unless for a morning or travelling dress, either of which should be as simple as possible, there is, generally speaking, no such thing as a plain waist.

J. S. W.—Information regarding the requisite mental and physical qualifications can be obtained by communicating with the president of the institution named.

C. F. C.—1. Yes. The 19th chapter of the Second Book of Kings and the 37th of Isaiah are alike. 2. The number of verses in the Old Testament is 23,214; in the New Testament, 7,959.

A. A. F.—To make basilicon ointment, take ten ounces of resin, four ounces of yellow wax, and sixteen ounces of lard. Melt them together, strain through muslin, and stir constantly until cool.

P. P. L.—Diamonds perfectly free of colour are said to be of the first water, and are most valued. Those of a slight rose tint are valued highly, and next to these green tinted stones are considered the best.

L. M. G.—An attractive boating dress for a young girl has the skirt, collar, and cuffs made of blue and red striped flannel, and the blouse, skirt trimming, and sack of plain dark blue flannel to correspond.

INQUIRITIVE.—The drugs named will have the desired effect, but as they are deadly poisons, and their constant use highly injurious to the system, we must respectfully decline to give you the required information.

W. H.—Tell your mother what your aunt said about the young man going to marry his cousin, and she will soon learn the truth of the matter. The probability is that the rumour was merely a bit of baseless gossip.

MARTY.—Nainsook, with tiny embroidered dots like point d'esprit, is the newest fabric for simple white dresses, and they are made up with a yoke and deep cuffs of open embroidery, and have long skirt drapery.

J. B.—The lines—  
Thus, from childhood's hour,  
I've seen my fondest hopes decay!"  
Are by Tom Moore. They occur in "Lalla Rookh."

W. W.—You are not too old to study a profession, if you should give your whole heart to it. But if you actually prefer an out-door life, your success in a profession, the study of which you have yet to enter upon, might be doubtful.

J. N. P.—Many counterfeit coins and medals exist. The Greek forgers were very skilful. The Roman forged money was mostly cast. Old English coins have also been forged, and rare dates are often found carefully altered from common years.

M. J. S.—Charles F. Browne (Artemus Ward) edited "Vanity Fair," a humorous publication, in New York, in 1860. After its failure he resorted to lecturing, and his first lecture was delivered on December 23rd, 1861. In 1866 he came to England, where he died of consumption.

C. W. F.—To make lemon turnovers, take four dessert-spoonfuls of flour, one of powdered sugar, the rind of one lemon, two ounces of melted butter, two eggs, and a little milk. Mix flour, sugar, and lemon with the milk to the consistency of batter; add the butter and eggs well beaten. Fry, and turn over.

ENERGETIC SCHOOLBOY will do well to study her spelling book a little closer. The portrait is that of a pleasant-looking Irish girl who has a decidedly good opinion of herself. 1. The 8th of December, 1874, fell on Tuesday. 2 and 3 answered above. 4. Potatoes have a tendency to fatten. To keep slim avoid all foods containing starch and sugar; also beer, spirits and wine, live chiefly on animal food well cooked and stale bread, and take plenty of exercise. 5. Most improper. 6. Fair; practice from good copies. 7. The young gentleman certainly should raise his hat under the circumstances.

G. G. A.—The lines from Butler's "Hudibras," to which you refer, read as follows:

"He that complies against his will,  
Is of his own opinion still;  
Which he may adhere to, yet disown,  
For reasons to himself best known."

LOLA.—1 and 2. They are secret trade processes. 3. Take plenty of vigorous exercise in the open air, live sparingly, and press out the blackheads with the barrel of a watch key, and then bathe with spirits of wine. 4. Use it by all means; it is not an uncommon shape. 5. Washes will do you no good. 6. With pleasure, but send stamp directed envelope.

JENNY.—All dresses for girls from eight to fourteen years of age are now made quite simple. The skirts cling close to the figure, and are invariably finished with a long, soft sash, tied broadly around the waist, with hanging ends behind, while the bodice is usually an English blouse, or it is made with a yoke, and the full sleeves are gathered to a deep cuff.

R. R. V.—To remove sunburn, take two drachms of spirits of wine, one half-pint of sweet milk, and the juice of half a large fresh lemon; simmer for half an hour over a slow fire, then allow it to boil two minutes; skim carefully and cool. When quite cold it is fit for use, and should be applied at bed-time and washed off in the morning with clear warm water.

ROSE BENEDICTA.—1. Careless, untidy, and inquisitive; possibly good-hearted. 2. No, but very unfortunate to the person who is of that temperament. 3. Act uprightly and kindly to all. 4. Yes; do nothing of the kind without your mother's leave. 5. He or she will show it or tell it. 6. Care and practice. 7. Yes, unless you are engaged. 8. Yes, if you carry it too far. 9. Out them well and soak frequently in hot water. Above all, do not wear tight boots. 10. No. 11. The 24th March, 1858, and the 26th May, 1869, both fell on Wednesday. Kindly in justice to other correspondents in future limit the number of your questions to say half-a-dozen.

## HAND IN HAND.

Pleasure and pain walk hand in hand,  
Each is the other's poise,  
The borders of the silent land  
Are full of troubled noise.

While harvests, yellow as the day,  
In plenteous billows roll,  
Men go about in black dlamay,  
Hungry of heart and soul.

Like chance-sown weeds they grow, and drift  
On to the drowning main.  
Oh, for a lever that would lift  
Thought to a higher plane!

Sin is destructive; he is dead  
Whose soul is lost to truth;  
While virtue makes the hoary head  
Bright with eternal youth.

There is a courage that partakes  
Of cowardice; a high  
And honest-hearted fear that makes  
The man afraid to lie.

When no low thoughts of self intrude,  
Angels adjust our rights;  
And love that seeks its selfish good  
Dies in its own delights.

How much we take! how little give!  
Yet every life is meant  
To help all lives; each man should live  
For all men's betterment.

## O. C.

R. D. V.—A strict construction of the laws of etiquette does not allow a gentleman to present gifts of value to a lady who is not a relative or his fiancée; but in the case you mention you might give the young lady a nice book, say, a copy of Moore's, Tennyson's, Whittier's, Longfellow's or Lowell's poems, or some of Sir Walter Scott's, Bulwer's, or Thackeray's novels.

CURIOS.—The American Indians included in the census in each State and Territory are those reckoned as civilised, or outside of tribal organizations. Indians not taxed are by law excluded from the census. Estimates of their number vary widely—from 300,000 to 500,000 (the latter as estimated in the census of 1870), while the latest census or estimate of the Indian agencies, as reported in 1881 to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, gives 246,417 Indians, excluding Alaska.

N. H. C.—The steamships *Sirius* and *Great Western* arrived at New York on April 23, 1838, the first from Cork, and the latter from Bristol. The *Sirius* arrived first, and had the honour of being the first ocean steamship to arrive in New York; but the credit of being the first steam vessel to cross the Atlantic is due to the *Savannah*, which was built in New York in 1818. From here she proceeded to Savannah, Georgia, where she arrived in April, 1819. From there (May 25) she steamed for Liverpool, which she reached on June 20.

W. J. S.—There are a number of recipes for the cure of felons. One is to stir half a teaspoonful of water into one ounce of Venice turpentine with a stick until the mixture appears like granulated honey. Wrap a good coating of it round the finger with a cloth. If the felon is only recent, the pain, it is said, will be removed in six hours. Another cure is this: As soon as the parts begin to swell, get the tincture of lobelia, and wrap the part affected with a cloth saturated with the tincture. It will never fail, it is said, if applied in season.

M. H. T.—In regard to the amount of sleep required by persons in health, it seems to be conceded that the average is from seven to eight hours. Some get along with six, or even five hours, but no one measure will do for all, nor will the same amount of sleep suffice even for the same person at all times. A person weakened by sickness will require more hours than one in good bodily condition; and so will the one who has exhausted himself by hard physical or mental efforts. There is, therefore, no absolute standard for all persons in the amount of sleep, any more than in that of food. Something depends upon the temperament, much upon the constitution, and a great deal upon the exertions indulged in during the hours of labour.

W. F. C.—1. The title of doctor is said to have been invented in the twelfth century, at the first establishment of the universities. The first person upon whom it was conferred was Irnerius, a professor of law, at the University of Bologna. He induced the Emperor Lothaire II., whose chancellor he was, to create the title; and he himself was the first recipient of it. He was made doctor of laws by that university. Subsequently the title was borrowed by the faculty of theology, and first conferred by the University of Paris on Peter Lombard, a scholastic theologian. 2. William Gorrie was the first person, it is said, upon whom the title of doctor of medicine was bestowed. He received it from the College of Asti, Italy, in 1829.

R. H. W.—There are many ways of obscuring glass, some of the plans making the glass permanently frosted, others only temporarily so. For permanence, take a flat piece of marble, dip it into glass-cutters' sharp sand, moistened with water; rub over the glass, dipping frequently in sand and water. If the frosting is required very fine, finish off with emery and water. As a temporary frosting for windows, mix together a strong hot solution of bicarbonate of soda and a clear solution of gum arabic; apply warm. Or use a strong solution of sulphate of soda, warm; and when cool, wash with gum water. Or dab the glass with a lump of glazier's putty, carefully and uniformly, until the surface is equally covered. This is an excellent imitation of ground glass, and is not disturbed by rain or damp.

ROSINA.—Pins are made of brass wire, and pass through fourteen processes before they are ready for sale. First, the wire has to be perfectly straight, and cut into pieces long enough to make three or four pins. This is done by machinery which works so rapidly that one man can straighten and cut wire enough in one day to make two hundred thousand pins. Then the wires have to be cut into proper lengths, pointed, headed, whitened, polished and put in papers; all of which things are done by ingenious machinery that enables one man to do more than a thousand could do without machinery. Even the holes in the papers are pricked by machinery. In sticking the pins into the papers children are employed, who get such a knack at it that each of them can stick three thousand in an hour, or fifty in a minute.

CERITE.—1. Christopher Newport's "Discoveries in America" was first published in Vol. IV. of "Archæologia Americana," in 1860. 2. Newport was one of the founders of the colony at Jamestown, U.S. He commanded the three vessels which carried out in 1606 the first settlers of that colony, and was one of the council appointed by the king for governing the province. In 1609, after a brief visit to England, he returned with supplies and 120 emigrants, chiefly goldsmiths and "gentlemen," who were sent away by their friends, as was said, "to escape ill destinies." Some yellow miasm having been discovered near the present site of Richmond, Newport filled his vessel with it, thinking it was gold, and carried it to England. He subsequently returned to Virginia, after experiencing shipwreck and other hardships.

ANXIOUS.—Wouldn't it be better to buy your harness-blackening than to attempt to make it? However, if you wish to try your hand at such work, here is a recipe which is said to be a good one: Take of common yellow beeswax one ounce and a half; of mutton suet four ounces and a half; of turpentine half an ounce; of ivory black three ounces. Melt the wax in a vessel over a fire; then add the suet, and when both are melted, add the turpentine. Remove the mixture from the fire, gradually stir in the ivory black, and continue to stir and knead the mass until it is cold. It is to be used with a brush in the ordinary way. This blacking is not only suitable for harness, but is said to be a most excellent water-proof blacking for boots and shoes. It contains nothing that can injure the leather, but, on the contrary, tends to its preservation, besides giving it a brilliant appearance.

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